

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE PROPOSED SUPPLEMENTING SCHEME.—I.

MR. EDITOR,—It is known to most of your readers that at last meeting of the General Assembly a Committee was appointed to prepare a detailed scheme for the supplement of stipends, in accordance with the proposals of an overture presented by the writer, and to remit it along with a Sustentation Scheme, previously drawn up by another Committee, to the Presbyteries of the Church. As the result of several meetings held in Toronto, and considerable correspondence with members of Committee at a distance, this Scheme has now been prepared, and is, together with the Sustentation Scheme, fairly before the Church, two copies having been sent to every minister on the roll—one being designed for the representative elder. In addition, you have been kind enough to give a place in your last number to both Schemes.

It will not be considered out of place if I give some explanations regarding that Scheme which is now for the first time submitted. It seems both due to the Committee which prepared it, and demanded by the great importance of the object which it contemplates—the more adequate support of the ministry of our Church. For the present I refrain from instituting any comparison between the two Schemes submitted to the judgment of Presbyteries, contenting myself with making such statements as may aid in understanding the provisions and in determining the merits of the one drawn up by the Committee appointed at last Assembly.

1. This Scheme, it will be seen, is purely a supplementing one; that is, it devolves the main duty and privilege of sustaining the minister on the congregation enjoying his services, bringing the resources of the body to its assistance only in those cases in which it is too weak to do the work unaided. It differs from the Scheme in operation at present: first, in aiming at a more liberal scale of ministerial support in supplemented charges; second, in graduating within certain limits the amount of supplement according to the liberality of the congregation receiving it. The stipend in these charges ranges at present from \$450 up, in a few cases to \$700, with or without a manse. It is proposed to make it not less than \$600 with a manse, or an allowance for it, in all cases, and where the highest scale of giving is reached, to make it \$750 and a manse, or an allowance for it.

2. The Scheme contemplates the assistance of the same class of congregations as those at present aided, viz., "such as have pastors called by the people and inducted by the Presbytery, and as, in the judgment of the Presbytery, are entitled to assistance in the support of the ministry." It does not respect, therefore, those fields, now becoming numerous, which are wrought by an ordained missionary chosen by the Presbytery to labour in them for a year or a term of years, and appointed with the concurrence of the Home Mission Committee. In the event of this Scheme being adopted by the Church, these would continue to be under the care and dependent on the assistance of the Home Mission Committee.

3. The conditions of admission to the list of supplemented charges are not materially changed under the Scheme. At present these are: First, a contribution towards the salary of the minister of at least \$400; and second, a rate of giving for this purpose of not less than \$4.50 per communicant, and \$7 per family. It is proposed, first, to retain the same rate per communicant, and to make the family the unit of calculation only in those cases, not many, in which the families are more numerous than the communicants, requiring in the case of these the same amount at least—\$4.50 per family. The application of a double standard is cumbersome and perplexing under any circumstances; it would become especially so in connection with the division of the Surplus Fund on the plan proposed in the Scheme. From an examination of its actual bearing in the case of congregations either on the list or entitled to be placed on it, it is believed that this modification, while simplifying the Scheme, will give us as near an approach to equity as we can expect to reach. It is proposed, second, to require that the congregation's contribution of \$400 for salary should be accompanied either by a manse or by a small allowance (\$50) for house-rent. This

change is made necessary in justice to those congregations embraced in the Scheme, happily three-fourths of the whole, which have provided manses, and should in fairness be credited with them. Then it will be observed that if by requiring a small equivalent for a manse, in the case of congregations not possessing one in addition to the minimum contribution of \$400, one of the terms of admission to the list is made more difficult to these congregations. On the other hand, the fact that provision is made for the inclusion of the manse or the allowance for it, in the contribution on which the rate of giving per communicant is estimated, will render compliance with the other term more easy. It is believed, moreover, that this change, besides being an equitable one, will have the effect of stimulating congregations needing supplement to provide residences for their pastors. The speedy erection of such in the case of all these congregations is, in my opinion, a matter of first importance.

4. It was impossible for the Committee to overlook the fact that not a few congregations needing supplement were not at present fulfilling the terms of admission to the list proposed in the Scheme, some of them failing in the first term—a contribution of \$400 and manse, or allowance for it; more in the second—a minimum rate of giving of \$4.50 per communicant or per family; a few in both. The number of congregations coming short in respect of the one condition or the other, or of both, is so great that one is at first almost led to doubt whether the conditions are not too difficult. According to the returns of the last statistical report, there were 305 congregations having settled pastors for the whole twelve months, which paid to these pastors less than \$750 and a manse, the point up to which the Scheme contemplates the salaries being raised when the highest rate of giving is reached. Of the whole 305, there are no fewer than 114, or more than one-third of the number, which came short of what the Scheme requires, antecedent to sharing in its benefits. This fact is at first sight a sufficiently disappointing one. More closely examined, it is much less so. Of these 114 congregations, there are sixty the membership of which is so large that a contribution of \$4.50 per communicant, or per family where the families are more numerous than the communicants, would, without any external aid, give a salary of \$750 and manse, or allowance for it. In other words, these sixty congregations have simply to contribute at the rate which the scheme of aid at present in operation requires as the condition of assistance—to give salaries reaching from \$750 up to \$1,000, and even over it. These surely are cases to be dealt with by the Presbyteries within whose bounds they are situated. I believe it will be one of the benefits of a wise and vigorously wrought Supplementing Scheme that many of these numerically strong congregations, some of them with over 300 communicants, will be led or constrained very soon to raise the standard of ministerial support. Of the remaining fifty-four, I find that a considerable number, even at their present rate of contribution, are giving a salary of over \$600 and manse. A relaxation of the terms, therefore, could scarcely be pleaded in their case. So far as I can judge, there are some twelve, or perhaps fifteen, congregations having at present settled pastors, in the case of which either their numbers are so small or the circumstances of the members are so much below those obtaining generally in the Dominion, that the enforcement of the specified terms as a condition of the supplement would be a real hardship. What the Scheme now before the Church proposes in regard to such cases is, that the Committee acting in conjunction with Presbyteries should make out a list of them and submit it to the General Assembly for approval; and that, having received this approval, it should admit them to the benefits of the Fund on a lower scale of payment to be hereafter determined. It seems quite likely that in regard to some of these congregations, equity will require that the lower rate of giving per communicant or per family should be permanently conceded, but the Committee is of opinion, and attaches much importance to the regulation, that a congregation placed on the list under this exceptional provision, and contributing less than \$400 towards its minister's salary, should not, in the event of a vacancy occurring, be continued on the list, unless prepared to contribute at least this amount. It seems to me vain to expect to reach a scale of ministerial support at all adequate, if we recognize as pastoral

charges congregations unable to contribute the above amount towards the salary of their minister.

5. The Scheme proposes to supplement all congregations on the list, in the first place, to \$600 and a manse or rented house, or allowance for the same—to make this, in fact, a first charge upon the Fund. It will scarcely be disputed that this is a very moderate minimum to secure to all. No congregation, surely, could regard itself as wronged in the raising to this amount of all the salaries of the ministers of the Church whose congregations has complied with the specified conditions, or had been exempted from compliance with them by the General Assembly. It would be disappointing indeed, and in view of the fact that \$600 and a manse at one point is of more value than \$700 and a manse at another, perhaps even fatal to the success of the Scheme, if there should be no surplus to divide among the congregations which, giving to their pastors less than \$750 and a manse, had complied with the conditions for a share in that surplus. This means that in the event of the Church adopting the Scheme, any Committee charged with the working of it would have to use its best endeavour so to keep the claims of the Scheme before the conscience of the Church, and especially of its wealthier members, that a surplus, if not sufficiently large to give a full share of \$150 to the congregations earning it, yet to give at least a near approach to it, should be on hand at the close of the financial year. Other Churches, not better situated, have been able to accomplish this. Why should not ours?

6. The Surplus Fund is the most distinctive feature in the Scheme, and the one on which the greatest reliance is placed to render it a success. In accordance with the provisions regulating its distribution, all congregations on the Assembly's roll paying to their minister at least \$400 and manse, but less than \$750 and manse, alike those which have received supplement up to \$600, and those which have not, shall be entitled to participate in this Surplus Fund—those contributing at the highest rate, \$7.50 and over per communicant, receiving a full share, or \$150; those contributing at the rate of \$6.50 and over, two-thirds of a share, or \$100; and those contributing at the rate of \$5.50 and over, one-third of a share, or \$50; subject to the limitations, the propriety of which will be readily seen, that no congregation shall receive from the Fund more than \$300 in all, and no salary shall by participation in it be made more than \$750 and manse, except in towns and cities. It is confidently hoped that, under the stimulus supplied by this provision of the Scheme, congregations which have been content to contribute at the lowest rate which would entitle them to supplement, will be led to contribute more liberally, and in any case the Committee will be fully empowered to recognize and honour exceptional liberality by enlarged grants. All who have given attention to matters of this kind know with what marked benefits similar provisions have been followed both in the Free and in the United Presbyterian Churches in Scotland.

This letter is already too long. With your permission I shall communicate in another, and, I trust, briefer one, what further needs to be said.

Toronto, Dec. 23rd, 1881.

JOHN M. KING.

ROMISH ORDINATION.

MR. EDITOR,—Unity in Church work is essential to success. Not less so is fixedness of principle, underlying modes of operation. Where the latter is defective, we look in vain for the former. A mere rule of the Church, with the will of a majority as its only basis, can bind no conscience. Its legitimate fruits are collisions of opinions and confusion of action. Such a rule, as affecting essentials, can have no weight with the Christian conscience. It is *ultra vires* of any Church Court to impose restrictions or enact laws destitute of reasons or at variance with Christian consciousness. Such a course excites dissatisfaction and threatens discord. These remarks are designed to apply to all questions involving organic changes, or affecting the application of scriptural principles, and consequently the harmony of the Church. Apart from this idea, Church action is simply despotism.

I make these observations in reference to the action of the Assembly on the re-ordination of Romish priests. There are, if not entire Presbyteries, yet respectable minorities who do not concur in the act of Assembly. Its practical effect must be recognition