

## Correspondence.

## FOREIGN MISSION DEFICIT.

Editor *Presbyterian Review* :

Will you kindly allow me to say that one of the most discouraging things about the situation is that the Church does not believe the situation is critical. People are heard to say again and again, "O, there is an annual cry about this time of the year," or "The estimates leave a good margin over expenditures, and it will be all right at the end of the year," or "The Committee will have plenty of money when the W.F.M.S. pay up," etc.

Now, I wish to say, without discussing past years, that this is no false alarm that we are face to face with a deficit of \$30,000 or \$35,000 which can be prevented only by some very special effort.

The total estimates for this year are \$128,842, and they leave no margin—indeed the expenditure will be in excess of the estimates. The Committee may be blamed for going too fast, but blame will neither give the bread of life to the perishing millions nor meet the present emergency. The fact just now is what I have stated, that without special effort we cannot escape a \$30,000 deficit. If that fact were believed and realized, we scarcely think it possible that congregations in distributing their funds would entirely ignore Foreign Missions as many are doing this year and as they have been accustomed to do in the past.

R. P. MACKAY

## TO TREASURERS OF MISSION FUNDS.

For several months past we have been meeting the salaries of Missionaries, and other expenses in connection with the various Schemes of the Church, chiefly by means of money borrowed from the Banks. The notes maturing this month amounted to \$52,000. It is most undesirable that any of these should be renewed, as the interest account is already very large. I take the liberty of asking Treasurers of congregations, and of Missionary Societies, to forward me any money now on hand, that we may be able to meet these notes as they mature. Many congregations have already held their annual meetings, and apportioned their Missionary money. Thus far, we have received nothing from a large number of these. The attention of Ministers and Treasurers is specially directed to this. Presbyterian Offices. ROBERT H. WARDEN  
Toronto, Feb. 6th., 1897.

General Assembly's  
SABBATH SCHOOL COMMITTEE.

CIRCULAR TO PRESBYTERIES.

Anent the overture on S.S. Publication and Editor.

In accordance with their circular note of Sept. 21, 1896, the General Assembly's Sabbath School Committee beg to lay before the Presbyteries of the church, the following facts and considerations which they believe will assist them in arriving at such a decision on the Overture re a Sabbath School Board of Publication and the appointment of an editor as will be most conducive to the best interests of our work amongst the young.

In the first place we would draw attention to the fact, that the overture does not contain the suggestions of the Sabbath School Committee, but was carried in amendment to these. The special Committee of the Assembly to which the S. S. report was referred, after conferring with a sub-committee of the S. S. Committee, proposed that the publication of the Lesson Helps already fully authorized by the Assembly, should be removed from St. John to Toronto and an Editor appointed who should give his whole time to them. They also indicated the sources from which the salary of such Editor would come without instituting any new fund, or laying additional burdens upon the church. The S. S. Committee would not recommend the setting up of any new machinery. The present Committee is quite able to carry on the business it has built up, in the same manner as do the Hymnal and Record Com-

mittees. They deem a Board of S. S. Publication quite unnecessary. But at the same time the amount of work connected with editing and publishing the Helps, imperatively calls for the whole attention of one person. Do the financial prospects of the Committee warrant the church in appointing an Editor and general Superintendent of S. S. work? On this question they wish Presbyteries to be fully informed in regard to the true position of the Committee's finances and publication work.

1. Finances.—The total amount received during 1896 (May, December, 8 months), for periodicals and S. S. Supplies, not including payments or new orders for 1897, was \$4,240, the cents and units are omitted for the sake of convenience and brevity. Children's Day contributions amounted to \$2,040, \$500 were given as special donation to wipe out deficit and unpaid accounts, will yield at least \$500. Thus the total assets of the Committee on Jan. 1st, 1897 were \$7,180.

The cash paid out on bills and notes was \$7,230, and there are personal notes of the Convener and others, on which the Committee has procured the money it needs, not yet matured, amounting to \$3,220. There are no unpaid bills of any account, so that the total disbursements and liabilities for 1896, May-Dec., is \$10,450, leaving a net deficit on Dec. 31, of \$3,270.

We would respectfully call attention to the very large increase in the contributions from Children's Day. Between May 1st and Dec. 31st 1895, 207 Sabbath Schools gave \$997. During the same months in 1896, 324 schools gave \$2,040, an increase of 57 per cent. in number of schools contributing, and of over 100 per cent. in the amount contributed. The whole amount received between May 1st 1895 and April 31st 1896, was \$1,474, some \$480 having been forwarded during the first four months of 1896. If a like sum is contributed during these months this year, the total sum reported to the Assembly next June as donated directly by our Sabbath Schools, explicitly and exclusively, for the carrying on of the Committee's work, will be about \$2,500, as against \$1,474 last year. This shows very clearly that the Committee's cause is approved of by an increasing number of our S. S. Workers.

We would further notice the success which has attended the committee's efforts to reduce its deficit, said "deficit" being really money borrowed on personal notes in order to establish the publication of Canadian Lesson Helps for our own schools. The Assembly's special committee to which the report of the S. S. Committee was referred last June, and on which the two financial agents, Drs. Warden and Morrison were active members, went carefully into the state of the accounts, and found that the probable deficiency on December 31st would be about \$5,000. The liberality of our schools, the increase of subscribers during summer months (who are not included in any statement of our circulation as their subscriptions began and ended between May 1st and Dec. 1st); and the response to a special appeal to friends outside of our schools, enables the committee to close the year with much less than the deficit expected, \$3,270 instead of \$5,000. We ask Presbyteries to give full weight to these figures. That such results have been achieved in a year of great financial depression, when business houses long deemed as secure as the Bank of England, are going into liquidation, when discouraging deficits are presented to congregational meetings everywhere; and when the other Boards of the church are apprehensive of serious diminution in their funds, as, for example, the F. M. Board, which feels itself face to face with the possibility of having to recall some of our missionaries, that such results should have been attained, at such a time, is a matter of sincere congratulation and thankfulness. It certainly evinces a very deep interest in the success of the committee's policy on the part of those most immediately affected by it.

II. PUBLICATIONS.—The actual circulation of our Lesson Helps on Jan. 1st, 1897 was Leaflets, 33,268, Quarterlies, 21,145; Teacher's Monthly, 4,839. Since most of our publications began just a year ago the first edition of the subscription list with which we can compare these figures was laid before

the committee on April 1st, 1896, only eight months previous. We shall have to add at least 10 per cent. to our figures to bring them up to what they probably will be next April, for quite a large number of delayed renewals are received in January, and even in February, while new subscriptions are coming in every month of the year.

Then again very few, comparatively, are not less than 12 months. The large summer subscription list which is not included in either of the totals compared would more than make up for those which do not run the whole year. The following table shows our increase at a glance:

|               | April 1st, 1896. | April 1st, 1897. | Increase. | Per cent. |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Leaflets....  | 27,820           | 36,630           | 8,810     | 32%       |
| Quarterlies.. | 14,145           | 23,320           | 9,175     | 65%       |
| T. Monthly..  | 3,875            | 4,840            | 1,449     | 37%       |

We would also refer the Presbytery to the pamphlet containing testimonials from those who have used our Lesson Helps. The increase under the circumstances is evidence that our schools will liberally support our own publications. Consider for a moment the obstacles to be contended with, including the natural and very excusable reluctance of our teachers to give up excellent helps to which they have become accustomed, and it will be at once seen that only a very general desire to support a Canadian series would induce so many to discontinue the old for the new. If the verdict of the subscription list means anything it means that the Home Study Lesson Helps meet a felt want of this church.

It has been frequently asserted that it would be impossible, in the comparatively limited field of our church, to obtain a sufficient number of subscribers for a self-supporting series of Lesson Helps, and certainly no one would advocate the publication of any that did not secure, within a reasonable time, a remunerative circulation. The present status of our periodicals ought to dissipate all doubts on this subject. Taking the circulation as on April 1st, 1897 to represent the average for the year (it is below what it will be), and carefully including every item of the cost (printing, binding, mailing etc.) of an edition large enough to supply these, we have the following figures:

|                 | Subscribers | Revenue | Cost    | Surplus |
|-----------------|-------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Leaflets.....   | 36,630      | \$1,832 | \$1,213 | \$619   |
| Quarterlies.... | 23,320      | 2,332   | 2,060   | 272     |
| T. Monthly..    | 5,324       | 2,130   | 1,432   | 698     |
|                 |             | \$6,294 | \$4,705 | \$1,589 |

With our present circulation we should have a balance next December sufficient to wipe out nearly half the present deficit. But there is every likelihood that the current year will close with a greatly increased circulation. We are but beginning to obtain the support of our schools. To have secured one-fourth of them in two years is encouraging success, and three-fourths yet remain out of which our lists should be at least doubled. The S. S. Committee are now able to present the church with a series of graded lessons helps established on a paying basis. Our church can support its own lesson helps and it is doing it now. In another year they will pay an editor's salary as well, for with a circulation increased only 50 per cent the surplus would amount to over \$3,000.

The Committee feel that the appointment of an editor is of the utmost importance to the success of our publications. Should Presbyteries veto this proposal it will be necessary for them to make arrangements with outside parties to publish, while the editing is done as now by some one who has other duties claiming his first attention. A contract would have to be made for at least five years and during that time the committee would see the profits which they designed for the prosecution of the church's work, absorbed by a purely business concern. Moreover in such a case it should be clearly understood that the General Assembly would have to advance at once about \$4,000 to retire the convener's notes, which now represent the liabilities of the committee. If the work of publishing remains in the hands of the committee the deficit can be gradually overtaken, but let the business on account of which the money was loaned