

of the general fund, or, in other words, after that an association has been formed and put into regular working order for the raising and the remitting of its quarterly or yearly proceeds to what may be called the great central treasury of the Church, there can be no objection, nay, it were most desirable that a distinct supplementary effort should be made in each parish for the express purpose of eking out and extending the allowance of its own minister."

The best commentary on the plan of "Sustentation" proposed by Dr. Chalmers is, first, the history of this fund for over thirty years, during which time it has held quietly on its triumphant way, though there were in the land adversity as well as prosperity, and in the Church nearly a complete change of leaders; and, second, the speech of Dr. Buchanan in presenting his report last May.

ITS HISTORY.

Here is the History of the Fund in a nut shell, wherein is given an exhibit of the Sustentation Fund since the disruption—(1.) The amount contributed each year; (2.) The number of ministers participating in the Fund; (3.) The amount of dividend paid each year; and (4.) The number of ministers who drew a full year's dividend:—

	Amount Contributed to the Fund.	No. of Ministers participating in the Fund each year.	Amount of Dividend paid each year.	No. of Ministers who drew full equal Dividend.
1844	£ 68,704 14 8	583	£105 0 0	470
1845	77,630 12 0	627	122 0 0	557
1846	82,681 17 4	672	122 0 0	580
1847	83,117 16 10	673	120 0 0	590
1848	88,996 9 5	684	128 0 0	596
1849	87,115 3 4	705	123 0 0	623
1850	89,764 3 6	720	123 0 0	680
1851	91,527 8 8	736	123 0 0	668
1852	90,794 10 5	745	122 0 0	675
1853	90,885 8 0	759	121 0 0	691
1854	94,635 10 6	765	119 0 0	696
1855	103,553 17 3	786	132 0 0	700
1856	108,972 12 5	790	140 0 0	712
1857	108,638 4 5	811	138 0 0	700
1858	108,920 7 0	825	138 0 0	703
1859	110,141 11 8	827	138 0 0	713
1860	109,259 17 11	846	135 0 0	723
1861	112,093 5 0	859	138 0 0	731
1862	112,616 6 5	872	137 0 0	724
1863	114,292 19 9	885	137 0 0	722
1864	115,784 19 6	894	138 0 0	715
1865	119,450 3 11	903	144 0 0	710
1866	120,296 11 5	902	143 0 0	741
1867	121,725 6 3	917	144 0 0	731
1868	131,312 10 5	923	150 0 0	728
1869	132,125 16 7	942	150 0 0	740
1870	131,262 19 1	947	150 0 0	757
1871	137,034 14 6	948	150 0 0	775
1872	137,677 15 5	957	150 0 0	778
1873	136,322 19 10	969	150 0 0	783
1874	152,112 8 4	975	150 0 0	770
1875	163,696 0 0	...	157 0 0	...
1876	172,641 0 0	...	186 0 0	...

ITS PHILOSOPHY.

The opening paragraphs of one of Dr. Buchanan's speeches, which is the only portion we can quote, are valuable specially, not only because he asserts his unqualified confidence as to its general features in this plan of finance, but because he indicates the true cause of its prosperity:—

"Moderator, this, which I now lay on the table of the General Assembly, is the thirty-first annual report of the Committee on the Sustentation Fund. In the course of the lengthened period our Church has passed through many trying vicissitudes. Thrown as she was, by the Disruption of 1843, into a position altogether new, and compelled in consequence, to deal with questions and to adjust herself to a state of things of which she had no previous experience, it is no wonder that serious differences should have at times arisen amongst us—differences grave enough to have more than once greatly agitated us all, and to have threatened the Church itself with dangers of a truly painful kind. From these conflicts of opinion the Sustentation Fund has by no means been altogether free. Views at entire variance with one another, as to the principles and methods of its distribution, have been occasionally discussed and pressed with a keenness which it was impossible to contemplate without anxiety. If hitherto we have been carried safely through these commotions, and if our great Central Fund has gone on steadily increasing in spite of them all, I believe it is due to the fact that our differences were, in the main, honest and sincere. If

brethren took opposite views of what was best and wisest, and most for the good of the Church, He who is "the Head of the Body," and whose patience with us presents such a striking contrast to our impatience with each other, has borne with us in consideration of the ends we were seeking; though, doubtless, the way in which we sometimes sought them must have been deeply grieving to His holy and loving Spirit, and ought, in the recollection and review of it, to humble us in His sight. Surely it is on some such grounds as these that alone we can explain the present singularly encouraging condition of our Sustentation Fund.

The revenues of the Crown, imposed and exacted by statute law and civil force, do not come into the nation's treasury with greater steadiness or regularity than does this fund of ours. It has in it the Divine "quality" of that "mercy which is not strained, but droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven." It blesses "both him that gives and him that takes." To the givers it is a means of grace—a means of elevating and ennobling their own souls. To the receivers it is a precious encouragement in their work, and a sweet assurance of the love and faithfulness at once of the people to whom they minister and the Master they serve."

This mode of Pastoral Sustentation has been inaugurated with complete success in the English Presbyterian Church, and with partial success in the Presbyterian Church of the United States: it is in successful operation in Ireland and in some portions of the Australasian Colonies. In fact, to this mode of sustaining the ministry, in harmony with Scripture and with the Presbyterian polity, we find the Churches of that faith gravitating all over the world. There are difficulties in the way; but the faith is the right one, and it will therefore be found that difficulties vanish as the Church moves on in faith and in obedience to Divine principles.

HOME MISSION WORK.

MR. EDITOR,—It must have been gratifying to all who are interested in our Church's progress to observe the large amount of attention you have bestowed on Home Mission work in recent issues of your valuable journal. Probably you feel, in common with many others, that a crisis has come in this department of our work that calls for fidelity and zeal in dealing with the subject. It is well to look facts in the face. No man of true moral courage can be afraid of facts however unfriendly in their character they may be. The present mode of conducting our Home Mission work must be regarded largely as a failure. That much good has been accomplished by it, and that much of the self-sacrificing spirit of the true missionary and of the true minister has been manifested in its working will be acknowledged with gladness and thanksgiving. But as the tree is known not so much from its foliage or its blossom as by its fruit, so the value of any scheme will be revealed by its practical and permanent results. And if the present method of conducting our Home Missions has landed the fund in bankruptcy, compelled the committee to take a step which looks more like repudiation than anything which has ever happened in the Presbyterian Church before, and rendered the contraction of the field an imperative necessity, can any one fail to see that the method is not the best adapted to achieve the highest success. For the cause of failure is not inherent in the nature of the work. No department of our work commands more fully the sympathy of the people or interests so directly and personally a larger number of our congregations. It could not well be otherwise. The future of our Church depends, under God, on the wisdom and success with which its Home Mission is conducted. Not more certainly would the former reap sparingly from shallow culture and a stingy seeding, than the Church must reap the appropriate fruits of inefficient tillage or parsimonious dealing. And our people cannot but see truths so salient and appreciate facts so important. Nor is the deficient fund due to any lack of co-operation on the part of ministers. Not one of the other schemes is so happy in this respect. Should they be in difficulty it might be alleged that too much work was devolved by the Assembly on one man. But in every Presbytery there is a special committee to foster Home Mission work and guard its interests, the Convener of which in many cases performs a larger amount of work in the interests of the scheme than the Convener of the Assembly's Committee can possibly perform. And

this work is freely given and without any charge on the fund.

Nor can the commercial depression be blamed altogether for our financial deficit and the inevitable contraction of the work. The other schemes are apparently in a hopeful condition, though no such special appeals have been made on their behalf as have been made on behalf of this one, but which we fear must not be soon repeated.

Where, then, lies the weakness of the scheme, and what mode of carrying on the work seems most likely to achieve success?

The main point of weakness, as it seems to me, lies in the fact, that nowhere in connection with the work is there centered a sense of responsibility combined with powers adequate to its right discharge. One man is Convener, another is Treasurer and still another is Secretary. No one seems to be in a position to speak with that authority which comes from intimate knowledge regarding the condition and prospects of the fund; or to define the relation between contemplated expenditure and probable income. Thus in a great measure the Committee work in the dark while incurring large liabilities; and before they are aware salaries are overdue, the fund deeply in debt, while delay in payment inflicts hardship on many worthy men. Then come proposals and resolutions which must be painful to the Committee, ruinous to the missionaries, and scarcely creditable to the Church.

And even as there is no one in a position to prevent the expenditure outrunning the income, so also there is no one persistently to keep before the Church, before individual congregations, and before the minds of wealthy members their solemn and binding duty towards this fund. The liberality of the Church will be evoked only in proportion to the amount of well-directed effort expended. Nor must we reckon on such proximity to millennial times as to expect the gold and the silver to come spontaneously into the treasury of the Lord's house.

Now my conviction is that this state of affairs would be largely remedied by combining a sense of responsibility with every facility for its faithful discharge. Let there be an agent appointed, entrusted with the entire working of the scheme. Let him be one in whose piety, wisdom, energy, skill, business ability and indomitable courage the Church can confide. Let him be Treasurer and Secretary both in one. Let him, in ever-wakeful correspondence, encourage liberal congregations to yet nobler things, and ply tardy and diligent ones with incessant reminders, until, because of his importunity, they arise and give. Let this be tried, and I am no prophet if a year hence we find any occasion to contract work which should be ever expanding or to lower salaries that in almost every case ought to be raised. There can be no doubt but to treatment of this kind the work of the French Board owes its marked success and its freedom from financial difficulty. It comes neither of accident nor of superior claims, but simply as the result of vigilance and unceasing toil, that the congregations and mission stations contributing last year to French work outnumber, according to the published reports, those contributing to any other mission scheme by about one hundred. By similar methods, with such grounds of appeal and interests so widely diffused as Home Mission work must ever furnish, what might not be accomplished? If the Assembly is not prepared for the appointment of an agent, then let French Evangelization and Home Mission work be combined, and let the Secretary of the former, with suitable assistance, do the work of both. It would be more cheaply and probably more efficiently done in this way than in any other. Both departments are home mission work. In several fields the work is already combined, and in many others the same kind of union might be effected with great advantage.

Since something must be done, surely either of these plans is worth a trial. But if neither, then Synodical charge of the scheme is the only solution of the difficulty—a solution which has in it many features distasteful to

UNICUS.

THE Russian Government continues to act with merciless severity toward the Nihilists. It has just been ascertained that at its instance four revolutionists were hanged last month at Kiev. The same government is about to issue 5 per cent. bonds to defray the expenses of the war with Turkey.