

the Committee; and it has no threat held over it of being dragged before the Assembly. These are certainly invidious if they are not indeed humiliating distinctions. One may be pardoned for feeling a degree of surprise in finding them almost the most prominent features of a Scheme projected in the name of the unity of the Church, and the parity of its ministers a Scheme by the adoption of which "the whole Church in its ministry is to stand shoulder to shoulder on the same just and equal platform." I do not stop to show that the attempt to apply these provisions generally to the aid receiving congregations, even by a wise and considerate Committee, would almost certainly result in widespread and hurtful irritation. A very little reflection will show that there is material for any amount of misunderstanding and grievance in these regulations. They are probably necessary to prevent abuse in the working of a Sustentation Fund. Their presence in the Scheme shows them to have been deemed so in the opinion of the intelligent Committee which drew the Scheme up. That is only another evidence that such a mode of sustaining the ministry is unsuited to the circumstances of a Church covering so wide an area as ours, and composed of such diverse material.

III The Scheme is one which could only be wrought by means of a large and expensive agency. There were reported at last Assembly 730 pastoral charges. More than the half of these embrace at least two congregations with separate Boards of Management, giving 1,095 congregations at least with which the Committee administering this Fund would have to deal, and these extending from Portage la Prairie to St. John's, Newfoundland. The working of the Fund would necessarily embrace the receipt and entry of monthly receipts from many of these, and at least quarterly receipts from all; the payment of the quarterly dividend to all the ministers on the Minimum Stipend platform, and of the grants-in-aid to those not on it; negotiations with all aid-receiving congregations as to the amount which each must contribute in order to entitle its minister to be placed on the Equal Dividend platform; negotiations with all aid-giving congregations as to what each of them would "be expected to contribute to the Fund," beyond the equal dividend; the revision of these from time to time, according to the ever-changing ability of the congregations; negotiations with congregations on becoming variant, as to the amount they are to pay to the Fund before being empowered to proceed to call a minister; dealings, by correspondence or by deputation, with congregations which fail to implement their obligations to the Fund; the examination of the accounts of all aid-receiving congregations, a special arrangement with the congregation, in all cases in which there are debts on buildings requiring a yearly outlay for interest. Such is the programme of work which this Scheme lays out for the Committee administering it. It does not admit of comparison, but only of contrast with the work connected even with our largest Scheme—that of Home Missions. It is impossible to state what amount of agency would be required to carry it out. It would certainly take, in addition to the labours of the Committee—labours withdrawn for the time from other important work—the entire time of one of the best business men in the Church, with a staff of clerks more or less numerous. The mere bank and postage account connected with the transmission of so many cheques, post-office orders and registered letters would be a large item. And the whole of this expensive and cumbrous machinery is set up and brought into action to do what? to transfer the sum of from \$25,000 to \$30,000, or about one-fifteenth part of the salary paid last year, from the stronger congregations of the Church to the weaker.

IV The adoption of the Scheme would introduce an element, the disturbing effect of which would be felt in the financial arrangements of the majority of our congregations, and, in all our Church Schemes. The case of the Free Church of Scotland, in which the Sustentation Scheme has been wrought with so much energy, and, though not soon and not without great difficulty, with such remarkable success, is frequently adduced by the advocates of its adoption by our Church. But in its case the Scheme was inaugurated at the very inception of the Church. It was made the main Scheme from the first, and the financial arrangements of congregations and the prosecution of Home and Foreign Mission work were shaped and subordinated so as to secure its success. In large con-

gregations, modern seat rents and open collections were sufficient to provide for the usual congregational expenses, and the Supplement paid to the minister beyond the equal dividend. The claims of Home Missions, Foreign Missions, and other Schemes were met by a simple annual collection, while the whole strength of the congregation was thrown into the Sustentation Fund Association, with its monthly collections and its munificent subscriptions. We, on the other hand, are asked to institute this Scheme, when we have been developing, under providential leading, our congregational and general financial arrangements for thirty, forty and fifty years in another form altogether. Many of our congregations—an increasing number, I am glad to believe—have no seat rents, and raise, by weekly offerings or by semi-annual subscriptions, all that is required to meet the expenses of sustaining ordinances for themselves. In most of them, missionary organizations for taking up, at stated and not distant intervals, contributions for the Schemes of the Church have been formed, and have been working with such good results that the sum for these objects, which amounted in 1875 6 to \$117,259, amounted last year to \$171,189. Now, it has never been stated, so far as I know, by the advocates of the Sustentation Scheme, in what way the larger or the aid-giving congregations, on which mainly the success of the Scheme must rest, are to contribute their amounts to the Fund—whether through their Boards of Management or through their Missionary Associations, or by means of distinctive Associations, with their monthly or quarterly collections. But in whatever way it is done, I am firmly of opinion that in adopting at this stage a vast Scheme of this kind, we introduce an element the disturbing effect of which on the machinery for raising and disbursing money for congregational and general purposes, which has been formed without any such Scheme in view, and which is now in successful working, it is impossible to calculate beforehand; while on the harmonious working of this machinery depends our ability to meet existing obligations, and the ever-increasing demands made through our rapidly extending Home Mission field.

These considerations are, in my opinion, of such undoubted weight, that it is difficult to understand how, in view of them, a single Presbytery should recommend the adoption of the Sustentation Scheme by our Church. There is no force in the argument that it has succeeded elsewhere—say in the Free Church of Scotland; for it is still an experiment, and not an altogether hopeful one, in the Presbyterian Church of England. It may be suited to the Free Church. We know that it was in a manner necessary at the disruption period. It does not follow that it is suitable here. We have neither the large centres of wealth nor the wide stretches of poverty which are found within the Free Church of Scotland, in the co-existence of which both the success of the Fund and the necessity for its institution are found; while we have geographical distances to contend with, and obligations for College and Home Mission work to meet, which that Church has never had.

While I entertain, therefore, a high regard for the gentleman from whom this Scheme has emanated, and while no one can doubt that it has been conceived and advocated with the very best intentions, I have ventured to criticise it freely indeed, but I trust without either exaggeration or misstatement. I have written oftener and more fully on the whole subject than I had intended, and unless some new phase of the question is raised I shall not again trespass on your readers' attention. Your columns may be reserved for the discussion of other subjects, or of this one by other pens, and my time is required for other and still more pressing interests.

Toronto, March 3rd, 1882. JOHN M. KING.

P.S.—Since writing the above, THE PRESBYTERIAN of March 3rd has come to hand; and there is in it, I am glad to see, another letter from my friend Mr. D. D. McLeod. In this letter, while making no attempt to substantiate the extraordinary statement contained in a previous one, that "that (the Supplemental) Scheme had been adopted by no Church in the world but one," Mr. McLeod endeavours to controvert at two points the positions which I had taken, your readers must judge with what success.

Glancing at the first, I had said, in opposition to the above statement, "The Supplemental Scheme is in operation in the large majority of Christian Churches

on both sides of the Atlantic;" and the reply is, "This assertion is in direct contradiction to what Mr. King stated in his former letter." Now, what had Mr. King stated? That the Scheme matured by the Committee and now sent down to Presbyteries, while agreeing in its "general principles" with the Supplemental Schemes of other Churches, was "in its details different from those of any Church known to the writer." Where is the contradiction alleged? The Supplemental Scheme—that is, in principle, the plan of assisting weak congregations to enjoy the benefits of a stated ministry by grants in aid—is in operation in various Churches. This particular form of the Scheme, with its details adapted to the circumstances of our Canadian Church, is not found in any of them. It will be difficult to make out either contradiction or contrariety between these two assertions.

Mr. McLeod is, if I am not mistaken, as little successful in the second point which he criticises. I had expressed regret at what looked "so like an attempt to prejudice the fair consideration of the Supplemental Scheme by connecting it *exclusively*, and without any good ground, with one Scottish Church." And I had been careful to italicize "exclusively," so as to make it impossible for any one to mistake what was meant. How does Mr. McLeod reply? In these words, "All I state is, that the Scheme of Mr. King is the Scheme now in use in the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland." Who does not see that this is to shift the ground completely? To state that "Mr. King's Scheme"—again, why Mr. King's?—"is now in use in the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland," while not entirely accurate, is very different from and much less objectionable than to say that "the Supplemental Scheme has been adopted by no Church but one;" and that "it is a Scheme whose only one commendation, so far as he can see, is that it is in use in" that Church. I accept, however, very willingly, Mr. McLeod's disclaimer of any attempt to prejudice by these statements the fair consideration of the Scheme.

J. M. K.

AGED AND INFIRM MINISTERS' FUND.

MR. EDITOR,—It appears, from a report of their proceedings in your issue of February 17th, that the Presbytery of Huron has disapproved of the regulations submitted to the Assembly by the Committee on the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund, and, "after a long discussion," adopted an overture that goes far beyond the object contemplated in the regulations, proposing as it does a radical change in the constitution and administration of the Fund. In a letter in the same issue, the attention of Presbyteries is called to the overture, with a view to their considering whether its proposals may not be a proper substitute for the regulations now before them.

I do not wish in this communication to consider the overture on its merits; but I would respectfully submit to Presbyteries the propriety of considering and pronouncing upon the regulations on their own merits, in view of the objects contemplated in framing them, instead of *pit'ing* against them, as the letter referred to suggests, such a scheme as that of the Presbytery of Huron, and thereby importing into the consideration of the regulations, questions that obviously call for a separate and independent consideration.

The Committee, in framing the regulations, had two important objects in view:

1. To mitigate the severity of the penalty attached to non-payment of rate. The penalty, as the law now stands, is *total forfeiture* of interest in the Fund. The Committee has reason to believe that the mind of the Church is largely in favour of such a modification of the law as will discriminate to the advantage of rate-paying ministers, without excluding others from interest in the people's liberality. Such a modification is now submitted.

2. To make the terms on which annuities are given to retired ministers *equally satisfactory* to the brethren of both sections of the Church. Previous to the union, the rule in the west was \$100 to a minister laid aside after not less than ten years' service, with an addition of \$10 for every additional year's service; whereas the rule in the east was \$200 to a minister retired after not less than ten years' service, with no increase for longer service. The former rule was adopted in the United Church, but the brethren in the east have always strongly objected to it. The new regulation, giving \$150 on retirement after not less than ten years' service, with an increase of \$5 for every additional