

## STATEMENT CONCERNING THE HOME MISSION WORK.

MR. EDITOR,—No more important matter will come before the Assembly, when it meets, than that of our Home Missions. And this is true not merely from the very great moment of the work to the Church, but, this year especially, because it is evident that a crisis has been reached. It is a happy circumstance that the Assembly will find that the debt has been almost, or altogether, blotted out, and that, in consequence of the effort to raise the money, the Church is standing with a feeling of self-respect and generous confidence, which has replaced the former state of perplexity and irritation. But just because of this it is the proper time to consider the question honestly and fearlessly, so that, if possible, the future may be the better for the past. A helmsman may learn much from the log-book and the wake of the vessel.

There is so little opportunity for one to consider a question of such magnitude, and containing so many factors, in the time which can be given to the reading of a report, that, unless the subject has been considered beforehand by members, it is scarcely possible that the full value of their judgment and experience can be secured. And I believe that a short analysis of the past four years will be of some interest, and, perhaps, of some value to many who otherwise might not find the opportunity to look into the matter so as to satisfy themselves with regard to our position and our duty. I believe that the analysis will shew that we have been carrying on a work which has been beyond our contributions, and which is now beyond our ordinary contributing power; that the work, though well done and large for our Church, has been very much hindered; that it has had to force its way in a manner which it is not pleasant to think of in connection with the cause of Christ; that we shall either have to find means to largely extend our contributions or confess that we are not equal to the work. The distance between the limit of our resources, and the requirements of the mission field is already quite as wide as the Church can span with outstretched hands. She may let go the mission field and be at rest. She may try, as she has been doing, to care for the spiritual wants of her children out of a too slender income and fall into embarrassment, and thus, in her affection, set an ill example before the world which knows too well how to buy what it cannot pay for; or, she may find a way—and may God grant it—whereby her ability may become equal to her duty, and whereby the work of the Lord may be accomplished now without embarrassment.

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

In 1876 it was found that a debt of over \$9,000, nearly \$10,000, had accumulated—\$883 of actual debt past due, and over \$8,200 due Presbyteries on the 1st of April. The Assembly decided that the debt should be allocated to Presbyteries, and directed that every effort should be made to have it cancelled by the meeting of Committee in September. The result was that nearly \$9,000 (\$8,791) was raised by the special appeal. This left nearly \$1,000 of debt unpaid. The whole revenue of the year, including this, was \$34,498, which shewed the ordinary income to be nearly \$26,000, apparently an income about equal to that of the previous year; and yet the debt at the close of the year was over \$3,000, i.e., the ordinary expenditure of the year exceeded the ordinary revenue by about \$2,000.

In 1877 and 1878 the ordinary revenue was about \$30,434, more than \$4,000 less than the total revenue of the previous year, but over \$4,000 larger than the ordinary revenue of that year, and yet the reported debt at the close of the year is \$5,867, nearly \$6,000.

In 1879 the reported income is \$29,688—not quite up to that of the year before—and the debt reached the large amount of \$11,000. At this point the case again became desperate, our credit failed, and necessity, as well as prudence and honesty, rendered it absolutely imperative that the debt should be cancelled. Another special appeal has been made on an estimate that \$46,000 will be required to pay this \$11,000 and carry on the work of the year. This shews an estimate of \$35,000 for the ordinary expenses of the year.

In tracing these efforts and their results one becomes aware that of the two forces represented by income and expenditure the latter is much the greater. The successive financial statements are like the story of a campaign in which the original army is dislodged

from one position after another in spite of the help of the successive auxiliary detachments. A superior power is in the field which gains strength with alarming rapidity and with a steadiness which points to only one result. So far that result has been postponed by several desperate and spasmodic efforts which could scarcely be repeated. The sketch which we have thus made of these four years must be taken in connection with certain facts and under certain conditions which vastly increase the significance of the lesson we are to learn.

Glancing back to the effort in 1876 to liquidate the debt, we find that from that point a systematic effort was made to approximately equalize the income and the expenditure. This effort has been made with the following result: In 1876 and 1877, the year in which the special appeal was made, the ordinary income fell short of the ordinary expenditure by nearly \$2,000, besides the \$1,000 of debt which the special appeal failed to meet. In 1877 and 1878, while the ordinary revenue advanced on the ordinary revenue of the previous year by over seventeen per cent., the debt increased during the same year over eighty per cent.; an advance of nearly twenty per cent. in revenue was accompanied by eighty per cent. of increase of the indebtedness. We may note here that such an extraordinary result following immediately after the effort to cancel the debt, and the consequent lightening of the burden, shews the pressure on the fund, or in other words, the necessity of the work. The strands of a girding cord had been, not severed, but relaxed, and the vigorous life at once, not only occupied every crevice in the exercise of its newly-found liberation, but, by its momentum, pressed beyond the limit, until the cinch cut deeply into the soft wood oncemore. In 1878 and 1879 the revenue was somewhat below that of the previous year, no doubt partly owing to the discouraging result of the past years. The debt increased nearly ninety per cent.; it had become \$11,000.

Taking up the line at 1876, once more, we find the revenue, which was \$25,700 + \$8,700, should have been \$28,000 + \$8,700, or about \$2,000 greater than it was, to meet the expenditure apart from the remaining debt.

The income of 1877 and 1878 which was over \$30,000 should have been over \$33,000, or over \$3,000 more than it was, to equalize income and expenditure, supposing the year to have opened free from debt.

Again the income of 1878 and 1879, which was nearly \$30,000, should have been nearly \$5,000 more to equalize income and expenditure supposing, as before, nothing but current revenue and disbursements considered; and for the present year 1879 and 1880, although, under the extreme pressure \$35,000 has been put in the estimate for current expenditure, the actual need of the work would not be more than met by \$5,000 more. Indeed, it is safe to say that while the amounts named would have been required to cancel the actual debt, or, rather, to prevent it, there would still have been debt, even had these amounts additional been advanced. Seeing that even then the revenue would not have met the requirement of the work, there is no doubt that from \$2,000 to \$5,000 per annum, beyond the amounts represented by the annual deficits, should have been expended on the mission field. The following statement may give some idea of the growth of the work:

	Income.	Deficit.	Income as it should have been.	Increase of expense each year.
1876-77	\$25,700	\$2,000	\$28,000	\$2,000.
1877-78	30,000	3,000	33,000	5,000.
1878-79	30,000	10,000	40,000	7,000.
1879-80	46,000	—	46,000	6,000.
				\$20,000.

In 1878 and 1879 the amount actually appearing in the second column, deficit, is only \$5,000; but, besides this, there were contributions by ministers of, say \$1,500, and deduction from grants \$3,500, in all \$5,000, which makes a total deficit of revenue for the year of \$10,000, as above. The first column shews, in round numbers, the annual income; the second, the amount by which that income fell short of the annual expenditure. These both together shew in the third column the revenue which would have met the expenses of the year; and the fourth column shews the increase in the expenditure, actual and required, of each year over the corresponding expenditure of the previous year. As observed, the successive increments are \$2,000, \$5,000, \$7,000, and \$6,000, or \$20,000 in the four years, or, an average of about \$5,000 per annum; i.e., if this estimate be correct, the past four years shew that the income should have become larger every year

by about \$5,000 to meet the growing requirements of the Home Mission work. The actual increase in ordinary revenue has been not much more than an average of \$2,000 per annum. The leeway has been made up by what boatmen call *spurts*, ministers' contributions say \$1,500, deduction from grants \$3,500, and extraordinary effort this year \$11,000. The matter of the \$3,500 deduction is not yet finally disposed of, however.

Knowing that these three special sources, and, we may say, all similar sources of revenue, are virtually closed, and hoping that we may never need to look towards any of them again, we may hazard a rough estimate of the future. Supposing the work to have been satisfactorily overtaken in the past, and supposing that it will not expand any more rapidly than it has done, with an advance, annually, of \$2,000 in our income we should accumulate debt, or leave work undone, at the rate of about \$3,000 every year. But the work has not been satisfactorily overtaken, for, although a very large amount of work has been done, and well done, we have not been able to do what we should have done, as almost every Presbytery knows full well. We should have had, at least, \$2,000 more each year to expend on the various mission fields to do them anything like justice. And, on the other hand, it is certain that the work will expand before us in the future with very great rapidity, and that the pressure on the fund will increase in proportion.

Suppose, however, that in place of an advance of \$2,000 per annum, the Church can increase the income of each year by \$4,000 over that of the previous year there would still be an annual arrearage of about \$1,000. But we shall not be satisfied to do just the amount of work we have done even if the field remained the same, for the work of many Presbyteries is now hampered and almost paralyzed for want of means. The income should have been at least \$2,000 larger, for the work as it now is. Supposing then, the Church to expand her contributions by \$4,000 every year, which will be doubling her present increase, there will remain \$1,000 of arrears every year. There will be required annually say \$3,000 more if we are to do the work we have now in hand as we should do it. And there will certainly be an expansion of the mission field and an increased demand for labourers which cannot be satisfactorily represented by anything below an increase of \$5,000 annually.

Taking three years as an illustration, a period which will probably have brought the crisis as between limitation of resources and rapid extension of work, on our supposition we should have,

1880-81.....	\$35,000, increased by \$4,000; or an income of \$39,000.
1881-82.....	\$39,000, " " " " 43,000.
1882-83.....	\$43,000, " " " " 47,000.

And surely we may with good confidence hope for such an advance as this. But there still remain the additional amounts mentioned, \$1,000 per annum arrearage on the \$4,000 increase, the \$2,000 per annum which should be given for work such as we have been engaged in apart altogether from the question of the extension of the field, and at least \$5,000 per annum for the extension of the field and consequent additional expense.

This will require \$5,000 the first year, \$10,000 the second year, and \$15,000 the third year, together with the \$3,000 additional each year on the two items named. This would give a total revenue of \$47,000, \$56,000 and \$65,000 respectively for each of the three years. More than this could be wisely expended, but to expend much less would, it seems to me, be something deeply to be deplored, in the presence of such opportunities; but, where are we to get the money? How are we to secure the highest liberality of our own Church on which the weight of the responsibility and honour of this work must fall? And where and how shall we secure the additional amounts which must be found for this work, above what our own Church can raise?

One thing is very encouraging. The experience through which we have passed, although painful and in some sense humiliating, has done us good. The Church has responded nobly in a time of severe depression. The channels thus enlarged will surely never be allowed to contract again. Many congregations which had scarcely done anything have felt and owned the thrill of anxiety for the mission field, and it may be hoped that the contributions of the past year are but the first waters of a steady stream which shall flow from a re-opened fountain. Our Church has a warm, true life. It is not easily stimulated to increased