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All communications for the Editorial, News of Churches, and Correspondence Columns should be addressed to the Managing Editor, Box 2648, P. O. Toronto.

Pastors and church officers are particularly requested to forward items for "News of the Churches" column.

CHURCH AND CHOIR TROUBLES.

PROPOS of some very sad and unseemly scenes in the church in Brantford, a Sunday or two ago, commented upon in our last—scenes such as newspaper correspondents are generally only too eager to report the "Mail" lately gave us a homily on the inharmoniousness of church choirs, and the dreadful sufferings which ministers often experience at their hands. Of the merits of the case as between the minister and choir of the church aforesaid we know nothing, but judging of it only by what that paper reports of the affair, we are inclined to think that the "Mail" has got the saddle on the wrong horse, and that a more appropriate subject for its homily would have been what the choir sometimes suffers at the hands of the clergyman. Whatever may have been the nature and extent of the aggravation offered to the minister in this instance, we can hardly conceive of a more ill-advised and improper method of dealing with the matter than that adopted by him on the occasion referred to.

Since reading the article in the "Mail," however, we have seen the authorized report of the sermon which caused the disturbance, and published by the minister in self-defence. A more aggravating piece of pulpit bluster has rarely fallen under our notice. Samson's dying prayer (Judges xvi. 20), which, it is said, was once made the text for a "farewell sermon," by a Presbyterian minister, would seem to have suited his discourse better than the text he chose. But to pillory the choir in the way he did, "notedly those sitting at the left of the organ, and at my right hand"—most of them young ladies, too,—was a piece of folly, to use no stronger term, that we do not care to characterize.

No doubt, as in most such cases, there have been faults on both sides. Church choirs like other people, are sometimes quarrelsome and unreasonable, and "basses" and "prima donnas" are said to be very "touchy," and not always devout during the service. It is only justice, however, to say, that after considerable experience with them, we have never found them anything but courteous and respectful; and if we had, we should have sought some other means than those employed by our wrathful brother to make them so. And as to the difficulties which arise between pastors and their congregations, the result of close observation for a number of years is our thorough conviction that, in most instances, the fault lies more with the pastor than with the people. Paul had to do, in his day, with "unreasonable and wicked men,"—men who "had not faith," and such there are in many churches now. But there are also hot-headed, selfish, blundering ministers, who make trouble wherever they go, and then think every one to blame for it but themselves.

Occurrences like those at Brantford bring reproach, not upon the churches in which they are enacted only, but upon the denomination, and upon the cause of Christ at large. They are, indeed, not peculiar to Congregational churches, although it must be confessed that the lawlessness in some of our congregations in "calling" men to be their pastors about whom they know nothing, exposes us more than others to such miserable escapades. An Independent church has an undoubted right to imperil its own peace and good name by taking any man it chooses for its spiritual leader, always provided that it remembers that it is under the law of Christ, but it has not the right similarly to imperil the good name, and the success of sister churches of the denomination to which it belongs. Independency is not anarchy, and never until our people properly appreciate the dis-

junction, and ask advice of those who have better opportunities than themselves of knowing the antecedents of wandering preachers, shall we be likely to prevent in some degree the recurrence of the scenes we have been deploring.

MANITOBA.

THE needs of Manitoba should demand the special notice of Canadian Congregationalists just now. Very late in the day—it might as well have been done years ago as when it was done—a church has been organized in Winnipeg. Now that that has been done, more must be done, other places must be occupied. In a recent letter from the pastor of the Winnipeg church, Mr. Ewing, he writes that that church has secured a lot for a building; it costs \$1,500. Now a church will need financial aid. Shall it obtain that aid? Who will respond to its call? We hope that there will be a hearty united effort on the part of our people in these provinces. Let us see to it that a strong church be established in Winnipeg, and then let us try to make provision for other points. Mr. Ewing can do but little. The country is so vast and the means of travel are so unsatisfactory that he cannot look after other towns than his own. He suggests the appointment of a Missionary Superintendent in the North-West. We are sure that such an appointment is necessary to the greatest, to any, success. Let us seek a man who will undertake this work. He can devote his time to exploring the country, looking out for promising neighbourhoods, forming churches, securing pastors and missionaries, and so on. Much of the progress of Congregationalism in the Western States of the Union is due to this system. Let us make a trial of it here. We can do far more than we have done as yet in the way of denominational extension. What we need is enterprise and energy. Our people will second and sustain larger efforts than have been put forth thus far.

HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN UNITY.

SECOND PAPER.

IT may seem superfluous to discuss from a Protestant point of view the hindrances presented by the Romish Church to union. Yet as the underlying principles may be found common to other organized forms of ecclesiasticism, a few considerations are called for. We shall therefore begin with Papal Rome.

In a posthumous work of Richard Baxter, "faithfully published from his own original MSS, by Matthew Sylvester, A.D. 1696," occur these words, referring to his own controversial utterances and the troublous times in which he lived. "My censures of the Papists do much differ from what they were at first. I then thought that their errors in the doctrines of faith were their most dangerous mistakes. But now I am assured that these misexpressions and misunderstandings of us, with our mistaking of them, and inconvenient expressing of their own opinions have made the difference in most points appear much greater than it is; and that in some it is next to none at all. But the great and unreconcilable difference lies in their Church tyranny; in the usurpations of their hierarchy and priesthood, under the name of spiritual authority exercising a temporal lordship, in their conceptions and abasement of God's worship; but above all, in their systematic befriending of ignorance and vice." It may be questioned whether the Christianity of the New Testament would be the loser if the dialectic subtleties of systematic theology were all swept into oblivion, at any rate the great majority of practical Christians, acknowledged as such, know absolutely nothing of them, and are none the less kindly to their kind thereby, or less reverential to the God they worship. If, moreover, men are accounted Christians, generally, and on all hands acknowledged as such, who are very imperfectly acquainted with "the equivocal abstractions of our creeds and formulas, it is necessary to exclude those who understand them but too well to submit the wings of their free spirit to such galling chains?"

But this question is anticipating; we may well at

this stage of our inquiry stay to consider how near Baxter may be to truth when he thus as above minimises error in doctrines of faith, resolving much diversity into misexpressions and misunderstandings. Dr. Dollinger, before his secession from Rome, an acknowledged prince of Papal theologians, gave to a High Church Anglican an explanation of the doctrine of Transubstantiation which was taken down, and sometime after given to a prominent Evangelical, not as Dr. Dollinger's, but as the High Churchman's own. Listening attentively, the Evangelical Churchman replied, "If that is your High Church doctrine of the Real Presence, I have believed it all my life." The hindrances to union found in doctrinal differences could well be left to our scientific theologians to smooth down, could only the pressure from the great heart and body of Christendom be brought to bear thereon. The Roman Catholic theologian could suit the Evangelical Churchman even on the vexed doctrine of the Real Presence.

Baxter struck the true obstacle when he declared "the great and uncompletable difference" to be that Church's tyranny and the consequent evils; there is the hindrance, there the "unreconcilable" papacy, and that papacy may be found not only at Rome, but in college, pulpit, pew.

Man assuredly is not responsible for the conditions of his birth. Ali is not to be condemned because of his Mohametan birth and education, nor the reader praised in that his childhood was spent with Christian surroundings and thus loaded with hallowed associations. Even the Roman Catholic prelate can view the members of the varied denominations of to-day as such in good faith owing to their education and surroundings. The ecclesiastical tyranny, therefore, or theological subtlety, that practically excludes such men, not the men themselves, is responsible for the division or schism deplored. The writer of one of the most thoughtful reviews of the Gospel history in this present generation, speaks in his preface of those who feel dissatisfied with the current conception of Christ and feel themselves "obliged to reconsider the whole subject from the beginning, and placing themselves in imagination at the time when He whom we call Christ bore no such name, but was simply, as St. Luke describes him, a young man of promise, (Luke ii, 46-52), to trace His biography from point to point, and accept those conclusions about Him, not which church doctors have sealed with authority, but which the facts themselves, critically weighed, appear to warrant." Men are being raised in this mental atmosphere, now no fault of theirs; implicit faith in "tradition of the fathers," is fast fading away from our environment, and the Church which refuses to deal with the facts of the world which is the field of its ministrations is not doing the Master's work. If to reverence, as we have been taught, the name of the Saviour, is a virtue, is belief in Arminianism or Calvinism, as we have been taught, a vice? or the walls which prevent intercommunion, blessings to be perpetuated?

We are entering no plea for Agnosticism, nor approaching a jellyfish form of Christianity, but we are inquiring, as we are entitled to inquire, in the forms possessed what hinders closer union? what perpetuates the unchristian though very natural struggle for existence? This, however, we are approaching, if in truth we have not reached it, that for many of the forms which belief assumes men are no more responsible than for the colour of their hair. Said Max Muller in the nave of the old Abbey at Westminster: "There are many of our best men, men of the greatest power and influence in literature, science, art, politics, yea, even the Church itself, no longer Christian in the traditional sense of the word. Some imagine they have ceased to be Christians altogether, because they feel that they cannot believe as much as others profess to believe." Upon whom rests the responsibility of excluding such men, the denomination that reads them out of its pale, or the men who have honestly and reverently inquired and find the traditions of their denomination at least doubtful, and who have the courage of their convictions? There are men who read themselves out of Christianity; for