

Our Contributors.

ARE WE WORKING THE SYSTEM WE HAVE?

BY KNOXIAN.

There has been a good deal of writing lately, all of it earnest and some of it rather severe, on congregational unrest, short pastorates, forced ruptures of the pastoral tie, clerical evictions, unemployed ministers still in their prime, congregational disrespect, or even contempt, for clerical grey hairs and sundry and divers topics of that kind. The discussion will do good. To find a remedy you must first know something definite about the disease.

That there is a good deal wrong no thoughtful Presbyterian will deny. An examination of the Blue Book shows that the number of ministers without work is out of all reasonable proportion to the whole number. Ruptures of the pastoral tie, more or less forced, are constantly taking place, one Presbytery about averaging an eviction each year. Undoubtedly ministers, honored and useful in their Master's work, are sometimes harshly, we might say cruelly dealt with. There is no use in denying these facts. They are quite well known to every Presbyterian who goes through the church with his eyes open. To deny them is to aggravate the evil.

To remedy these and other evils, various changes in our form of government are proposed. Some of these changes are revolutionary. Before we seriously consider their adoption might it not be well to ask whether we need to make fundamental changes in our system of church government. If our system is scriptural, and as some Presbyterians hold and teach, the only scriptural system, have we any right to make fundamental changes. Might it not be better to put more brains and conscience into the working of the system we have and try how that would work.

Presbyteries are just as much to blame as congregations for the present state of affairs—perhaps a good deal more. How many Presbyteries in this Western part of Canada—they do much better down by the sea—exercise what by any stretch of the imagination can be called spiritual oversight? How many? We know of just one—Toronto. There may be more, but we do not happen to be aware of the fact. As a rule, the Presbytery inducts a minister and takes no more notice of him or the congregation over which they placed him until something goes wrong. When the trouble has become so pronounced and chronic that it is serious, the Presbytery then steps in and sometimes makes it incurable. That, forsooth, is what we call taking the spiritual oversight of our people.

There is almost no Presbyterial oversight in the hearing and calling of ministers. Congregations invite, hear and call almost anybody they please. Whose fault is that? It is mainly the fault of Presbyteries. Presbyteries have habitually broken through every regulation made by the General Assembly's Committee for the settlement of pastors. They cannot break the laws and at the same time have the benefit of them. You cannot eat your cake and have it. There is no sort of sense in asking congregations to keep the regulations if Presbyteries habitually break them. It is assumed all round that the church has practically lost control of the supplying of vacancies, but, we ask again, whose fault is that? Can any honest man say it is exclusively, or even mainly the fault of the people? Respect for law and order used to be one of the distinguishing characteristics of Presbyterian people, and if they have lost that noble quality, we may well ask ourselves how that loss came about.

But supposing we have lost control to a large extent of the settlement of pastors, is that any reason why a pastoral tie, when formed, should cease to be an object of practical interest to the Presbytery of the bounds. Candidly now, how much interest does an average Presbytery take in individual ministers and congregations within its bounds. How much is there of spiritual oversight? If each man can hoe his own congregational row, why, let him hoe; if not, let him go. If he can swim alone, let him swim; but if not, let

him sink or make for some other water. If he can stagger along under his own burden, let him stagger; but if he can't, he need not expect any help from his Presbytery until he has become so weak that help is of no use. And this, be it remembered, is what in Ontario we call taking the spiritual oversight of our congregations. It is not so in Ulster. There the Presbyterian Church works the best system of pastoral visitation in the world and takes charge of Home Rule at the same time. It is not so in England, where the Presbyterian Church has to contend against difficulties utterly unknown in Canada. The plain fact of the matter is, we have no presbyterial oversight of the right kind in too many Presbyteries.

In one particular we do fairly well. There is always one link between the congregation and the Presbytery examined at least once a year. A congregation that fails to raise the required funds is pretty sure to hear from headquarters, but an oversight of that kind, though right and proper and necessary, can hardly be called spiritual.

Does some half angry reader shout "that fellow is running down the presbyteries?" All right brother; shout as loud, and as long as your lung capacity will permit. While you are shouting, we will say that wise, kindly, sympathetic, helpful presbyterial visitation once in two or three years would save the church from many of the scandals that are now striking at her vitals and lowering her in the estimation of thoughtful, cultivated men. If Presbyteries, instead of spending nearly all their time on the secular side of church work, gave more time to the spiritual; if, instead of everlastingly mending the machinery, they gave more attention to the only motive power that can drive the machinery; if, instead of acting as mere business bodies, more time, more effort, more thought, more prayer were given to the spiritual side of our work, we would not need to consider the propriety of adopting the Methodist itinerancy to enable us to keep our congregations in proper condition. If we worked the system we have, as we should do, we would be spared the trouble and shame of adopting methods that many intelligent and devout Methodists, in their present short period of service, were tired of long ago. If we need a modified system of the itinerancy, and perhaps we do, the lack of wise, energetic, constant, helpful, sympathetic spiritual oversight has done as much to create the need as any one cause.

PROHIBITION THE URGENT DUTY OF OUR DAY

BY THE REV. ROBERT WALLACE, OF TORONTO.

The Liquor Traffic is generally admitted to be the greatest evil of our day. The Hon. Wm. E. Gladstone says, "It destroys more lives than war, famine and pestilence." Charles Wagner, Esq., a leading writer of France, in his recent work "Youth," p. 117-119, speaks out strongly of the evils of the traffic and its fearful results in France and on the Continent of Europe, as any prohibitionist in Canada could do, and he says these evils are on the increase there. All the churches of our Dominion condemn it. The Presbyterian Church says: "The general traffic in intoxicating liquors is contrary to the Word of God and to the spirit of the Christian religion. No excuse can be offered for legalizing a traffic that is fruitful only in misery and crime. Look, then, at the extent of this traffic and the mischief it does. Leading authorities such as Canon Wilberforce and Archdeacon Farrar state the number of drunkards destroyed yearly in Britain and Ireland as at least 65,000. And the New York Homiletic Review, of Oct., 1892, reckons the number in the United States at some 80,000 and some say 7,000 in Canada; that is over 150,000 in the three most Christian countries in the world; then if we add nearly 100,000 for the rest of the world we have some 250,000 persons destroyed yearly by the liquor traffic. And this awful destruction goes on year by year out of an army of 800,000 to 4,000,000 drunkards. Then the liquor traffic causes more misery than all other evils that exist. It causes 73 per cent. of the crimes, according to the best authority, such as the Homiletic

Review, and from 75 to 90 per cent. of the abject pauperism which brings so much suffering on the wives and children of drunkards and such burdens on society. And these 250,000 drunkards are destroyed not only for time but also for eternity, for God declares that no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven." This traffic which fills all these homes with shame and sorrow, loads the public with the burden of pauperism, crowds prisons with felons, detracts from the productive industry of the country, ruins fortunes and disappoints hope. It also breeds disease and wretchedness, and hands them down to future generations. There is a legend which sets forth an important truth and warning, of a man to whom the devil is said to have offered the alternative of the choice between three sins, one or other of which, as the means of averting some evil or obtaining some good, he was bound to commit. The three sins were *murder, incest and drunkenness*. The man made choice of the last as in his estimation incomparably the least. This was the devil's desire, for when under the influence of it he was easily led into the other two. The saloon is the purveyor of the brothel, indeed we believe that but for the intoxicating cup houses of ill-fame in Christian lands could not be sustained. Saloons and low taverns are Satan's traps to ensnare souls and drag them to ruin. There are about 300,000 places in Britain where liquor is sold, and they are doing more to hinder God's cause than the 30,000 ministers of the gospel can do to advance it. And here we have in Canada large numbers of these dens of evil licensed by public authority to destroy the citizens.

Then think of the cost of this traffic. In 1883 the Hon. Geo. Foster stated the direct cost of the traffic at \$37,885,258, and the indirect cost through loss of labour, expenses through crimes committed as about half as much more, or say \$56,000,000, while the revenue as given in the Blue Book in the spring of 1884 was a little over \$5,200,000. That is, the traffic cost ten times as much as the revenue obtained from it by the country (Temperance Manual for 1884). \$10 per head of population. According to the best authority, such as Mr. H. Hoyle, M.P. for Dewsbury, the direct cost of the liquor traffic in England is some \$750,000,000 or \$100 per family yearly, and the indirect cost about \$350,000, say \$1,100,000,000 yearly. Then as a result mainly of intemperance they have some 3,000,000 persons applying yearly for parish relief, and some 85,000 in their asylums. The Homiletic Review, Oct., 1892, states that during 1892 the traffic cost the United States directly \$1,200,000,000, and indirectly \$740,000,000, that is in all \$1,900,000,000.

Thus in these two leading Christian lands more than \$3,000,000,000 are wasted yearly on this traffic. Then if we add \$860,000,000 for all the rest of Christendom, we find that this traffic costs about \$4,000,000,000 yearly, while only some \$12,000,000 are given yearly by all Christendom for the conversion of the world to Christ. That is about, 330 times as much is spent on this ruinous traffic as is given to obey the risen Saviour's parting command to Christianize all nations. Now the whole of this traffic, with all its dreadful evils, is the result of the worship of mammon, and is a fearful illustration of that saying of the Divine Word, "the love of money is the root of all evil." But let those engaged in that traffic remember that it is money on which the curse of a holy and just God rests, which will drag them as well as their victims down to eternal death if they do not give up this ruinous business.

This traffic also is the greatest hindrance to the conversion of the world to Christ. The intemperate habits of so-called Christian sailors, soldiers and traders in heathen lands, are found to be the greatest hindrance to the conversion of the heathen. No wonder that they sometimes remind missionaries that they have more need to convert their own people than to make Christians of those not so much given to the abominable vice as their own countrymen. So the traders from Christian lands carrying in liquor into India, Africa and other heathen countries, counteract the effort of the missionaries to Christianize the nations. Then while such an enormous amount is wasted on this

horrid traffic, the hundredth part of the funds that are needed cannot be obtained to make disciples of all nations. Yet more than 3,000 young men have lately offered to go forth as missionaries for this end if funds could be obtained to send them. Surely, then, no Christian nation should license such a traffic, for it is licensing evil which is a sin against a Holy God who loves human souls and abhors that which sends them to eternal woe.

Is this traffic that causes so much misery necessary for health? No. Two thousand of the leading physicians of Europe and America have signed a certificate which declares that a very large proportion of human misery is caused by this traffic, that that liquors are not necessary for health, but that they will tend to diminish the amount of labour and shorten life. They say that a person cannot be benefited by any quantity of wine, beer or spirits. Sir Astley Cooper says: "We have all been in error in recommending wine as a tonic. Ardent spirits and poison are convertible terms." Such are the views of Dr. Millar, of Edinburgh, Dr. F. R. Lee, Dr. Carpenter, Sir Benjamin Brodie, and Sir James Clarke.

Some say that prohibition would be a failure in Canada because it has been a failure in Maine. I attended large temperance conventions at Old Orchard which were addressed by several leading men of the nation, senators, governors etc., and it was declared by Neal Dow and others that before prohibition the great mass of the people in Maine were very poor, living in poor houses, often with broken windows. But since prohibition the wealth of the state had more than quadrupled and the people had now comfortable homes and respectable churches. And though Maine is naturally a poor state, they were able to lend money to Western people, and that they saved some \$24,000,000 yearly which before they had spent on the liquor traffic, and that there was not one twentieth of the liquor sold that there was before prohibition; and even this liquor could only be obtained in back cellars, in pig pens and such like places, to which respectable young men would not think of going, and that the liquor sold is brought in by visitors from other places, and it is chiefly such that seek it, while hundreds of thousands throughout the state have never tasted liquor. Surely, then, prohibition has been a great success in Maine. Now, prohibition would be worth far more to Ontario alone than to Maine, for it has far greater natural resources. Canada would save from \$80,000,000 to \$90,000,000 yearly by prohibition. We need not therefore fear the loss of revenue from the traffic, as it would easily be made up in other ways by our greatly increased wealth as a people. And yet for the sake of this paltry revenue our legislators have caused the country to be impoverished to twelve times as much as all the government receives from the traffic. And then who can calculate the awful moral guilt and unspeakable misery brought on our country by the great sin of licensing this great evil. Then let our people resolve to be no longer responsible for this guilt, by all voting for prohibition, and requiring our legislators to do the same, until it is carried out in the whole Dominion.

Sir Andrew Clarke: "I believe that every man's success is with himself, and must come out of himself. No true, abiding and just success can come to any man in any other way. Secondly, a man must be seriously in earnest. He must act with singleness of heart and purpose; he must do with all his might and with all his concentration of thought the one thing at the one time which he is called upon to do. And if some of my young friends should say here, 'I cannot do that—I cannot love work,' then I answer that there is a certain remedy, and it is work. Work in spite of yourself, and make the habit of work, and when the habit of work is formed it will be transfigured into the love of work; and at last you will not only abhor idleness, but you will have no happiness out of the work which then you are constrained from love to do. Thirdly, the man must be charitable, not censorious—self-effacing, not self-speaking; and he must try at once to think and to do the best for his rivals and antagonists that can be done. Fourthly, the man must believe that labor is life, that successful labor is life and gladness, and that successful labor, with high aims and just objects, will bring to him the fullest, truest and happiest life that can be lived upon the earth.