

Our Contributors.

TWO AND TWO

BY REV. THOMAS NATTRESS.

The first time men were ever sent upon a Christian mission they were sent by our Lord in person, "by two and two." It was the twelve apostles who were sent. Again the second time men were sent upon a Christian mission they were sent by our Lord in person, "two and two." It was the seventy disciples who were sent. In these two first instances we have an act of Christ's illustrating what we are disposed to call, the economy of associating ministers of the gospel two by two. Added to these we have the practice of the apostles, who are found to have associated themselves two by two for the preaching of the gospel, especially when they entered upon some new or important part of their great mission of evangelization. Peter and John were associated together. Paul and Barnabas were associated, and afterwards Paul and Silas. There are exceptions recorded; Philip went alone to Samaria, Peter to the Gentiles, and Paul to Macedonia. But even the vigorous and self-contained Paul had already acknowledged the economic principle emphasized by the Lord himself. And again, afterward, Paul seeks and finds companionship in Timothy, who was in a manner to be his successor, both when they were not actually associated in person, and also when they were so associated.

In modern times we have the practice of the Church of England and the Methodist Church in the same matter of associating ministers two by two; as minister in charge and his assistant in the latter instance, and rector and curate in the former. We ask why did these two great branches of the Church, and also the Roman Catholic Church, do this, and why do they do it? The answer comes: Because they have found and do know the practice to be an economic one. Why do individual congregations among ourselves do the same? For the same reason. There is advantage in the practice.

It may be questioned whether the advantages derivable have been full appreciated, or the circumstances under which there would be advantage well considered. The benefits realized by ministers going two by two on missionary tours through the province of Honan in China to-day is no more the mere companionship they afford each other than it was when similar missionary tours were taken through Syria some nineteen centuries ago. That would be only a selfish motive for association. But what is aimed at now, as then, is the conserving and concentrating of energy, the increase of persuasive power, and the enhancing of results. Let us suppose a case or two. Here we have two men associated in the pastoral charge of a congregation, who are alike in sympathies generally. One will in all probability be the other's senior, both in years, experience and ripened judgment, whilst the other has the advantage of youth and physical vigor. In another case we have two men associated together who differ vastly in that the one has great mental acumen, but lacks ability to handle men, whilst the other, though not so careful and able a student and expounder of the truth, is specially gifted as an organizer and leader. Again, the case might be supposed of two men, equally consecrated and devoted, but the one is impulsive and unguarded and needs the counterbalance of the somewhat sluggish temperament of the other. In each instance the one is the other's complement in some important particular or particulars. There is a consequent holding in check, an advising, an urging forward, a mutual encouraging, a harmonizing of inequalities, a sympathy that makes men strong. We are not all constituted alike; but there will be found very many men in the ministry who have within them a great longing betimes for the companionship, co-operation and advice that

the apostolic practice, instituted by Christ, would ensure them. They want sometimes to lean upon another who can sympathize and counsel because he shares the same labor, among the same people, amid the same encouragements and discouragements, and knows that he is himself often cast down when we are strong. It is not the mere sympathy of man for man that is necessary. It is a kind of spiritual kinship—a kinship in weakness, in strength, and in interest, that would naturally be engendered by the associating of men together "two and two" for the purpose of preaching the gospel, and which must have made it exceedingly hard for Paul and Barnabas to part company at Antioch.

Were it made the practice of the Church again thus to associate her ministers two by two, there are results of a very desirable sort that might be contemplated 'as quite within the range of the possible, if indeed they might not be considered probable. Among them is the reduction of the number of ministerial charges. For not only would two men so associated do the usual work of two men, but they would be in a position to accomplish more than two men could accomplish each laboring by himself. What has been said thus far in the pursuit of the subject has shown as much, or the whole argument goes for nothing. To reduce the number of ministerial charges would be to leave more ministers free for the advance work of the Church, and therefore make her more aggressive. It would mean, moreover, the lightening of the financial burden, for if ministers are now paid a fair remuneration for their time they would not need to be paid more than. In some cases—perhaps many—fewer churches would have to be maintained. The writer has before his mind a country district in Ontario where there are four, if not five, Presbyterian Churches within a radius of five miles, forming three pastoral charges. One Church centrally located would be within comparatively easy distance for the whole community. But let there be two churches. Here would be a saving of one minister and the expense of maintaining him where he is. There would be greater unity. There would be a better object lesson before the world.

Another result reasonably to be expected were the practice of associating ministers two by two made more or less general throughout the Church, is, that the number of involuntarily retired ministers would in all likelihood be very materially reduced. It has been said the ministry is the only profession or calling under the sun in which experience goes for nothing. And indeed congregations do seem to hold experience in the ministry at a discount, forgetful of the ripening and mellowing influence of years. Without a doubt the Church is suffering great spiritual loss from this very source. She should retain the services of these men whom she has trained for the work of the ministry, who have helped to place her where she is to-day, and who are both able and willing to do equally good work for years to come perhaps; and in retaining their services, reap also the benefit of their varied experience. There are few men who are a failure in the ministry. There will be found to be but few among those who seem to have failed who have not each his own particular good qualities and strong points. Then why, in all honesty, humanity and good sense, are there so many unwillingly retired? The policy is suicidal, both to the individual congregations that may be answerable and to the whole church. Let the ageing minister serve and die in his beloved congregational-home, meanwhile training his successor, may be, complementing and being complemented.

The question of the colleges of the Church is one, too, upon which the matter under discussion might be found to have a bearing. The literary department in the colleges, preparatory to the study of theology, is looked upon with much disfavor, for it has been much abused. The universities are easy of access,

and the high schools throughout the provinces have been brought to so high a degree of efficiency, that it is a rare thing to find a man proposing to study for the ministry whose case is really the "special" one for which the preparatory course was first intended. There are special cases. Yet might not the literary departments of the colleges be done away with? We are speaking of the economy of the two-by-two distribution of ministers and wish to show that it would be an economy. Inasmuch as the number of cases rightfully demanding a special course preparatory to entering upon the study of the ministry is very small, let there be enough elasticity about the associating of men two by two that these few ministers in embryo might be associated with grave and lettered seniors, who would gladly and ably assist their efforts in preparation for the regular college course in theology. Details cannot be entered upon, but here, already, is an aspect of the two-by-two arrangement of men that gives it the dignity of a college, and that of the truest character.

One more consideration, and then let the subject rest. There are many people who believe that corporate unity of Christendom, or of some great part of it, will some day be effected, and there are many others who devoutly wish that it may. Clear the ground of rubbish. It is rubbish (comparatively speaking) rather than substantial realities, that has kept us separate these generations. The sacred mission upon which we are sent begins now to so absorb the minds of men—even of theologians, that denominations have already made a beginning at being at one with each other. We have not reached perfection yet. Then let us feel after it if haply we may find it. If Synods, and Conferences, and Presbyteries could be persuaded just to stand aside and look on awhile, an experiment might be tried. Let congregations of different denominations, already well disposed toward each other, unite under ministers chosen from these denominations. Give scope for individuality in method, and let the preconceived notions of the people be not disturbed with too great violence. The localities occupied are no longer divided, but in common and occupied together. Where formerly there was a hard struggle for existence, attended by much discouragement, on the part of one or both the denominations interested in the experiment, now there is a chance to live—and there will be life. The people find they are kith and kin in their most holy religion. They will not quarrel now as to the denominational name they shall bear. That matter, meanwhile, has been allowed to pass without important consideration. But this instance of the association of ministers two by two has been attended with happy, fruitful results, and the genius of the corporate unity of Christian bodies has been discovered.

The case is a supposed one; but was it not a reasonable one to suppose?

Amherstburg, Ont.

STRAY THOUGHTS ABOUT WOMAN AND HER WORK.

BY HANNAH ISABELLE GRAHAM.

This is the century of woman's intellectual and physical development. The elevation of woman marks national as well as social progress, for no race rises above the condition of its women.

To her influence, in that true sphere of labor, the home, the ennobled lives of countless millions bear testimony. That she has not been a cipher in the political destiny of nations is evidenced by the fact that Alexander could rule the world but not his wife! That in the Church she is a silent but none the less powerful witness is proved by the existence of such organizations as the W.F.M.S. and other kindred benevolent and philanthropic institutions.

Every generation has had its noble and devoted women who have sought to restore to this sin-stained earth some of the beauty and brightness of that lost Eden, coming

early in the morning with their sweet spices of self-sacrificing love to minister to those who will one day form a part of Christ's mystical body.

The late annual meeting held in Toronto has brought the woman's spoke of the missionary wheel up to the top. This society is like heaven hid in the churches. Many pastors can trace the rapid growth of missionary zeal in their congregations to its silent workings. If as women we expect to achieve glorious results through this organization we must be united in heart and purpose. We must cherish a spirit of loyalty to those who are set over us, and strive to fulfill the obligations which rest upon us individually and collectively. The great work we have undertaken can only be accomplished by persistent, patient, earnest effort.

The world's evangelization is not an easy matter, even from the divine standpoint. Is it any wonder, then, that clouds often surround our human purposes. But although God sees the obstacles and difficulties which impede the progress of His kingdom, He is determined to come off more than conqueror; for the prophet Isaiah tells us that He will neither fail nor become discouraged. If we would have our society strong and successful in winning many souls for Christ; we should be often found in earnest supplication that the same spirit of heroic endurance and steadfast purpose which characterized our Master may be found in every member of our auxiliaries. That patient, wonderful spirit which enables Him to bear with the ignorant, unlovable, rebellious members of our human family, from generation to generation. Great eminences are slowly climbed. The mightiest results are attained only by patient, strenuous effort.

When John Wesley was once asked by what magic he had rendered his followers so efficient he is said to have replied that the great secret consisted in this that they were "all at it and always at it." The smallest duty becomes sacred when performed faithfully. The coral insect is such a tiny creature that it requires to be placed under a microscope in order to be seen, and yet these smallest of God's creatures have through centuries of patient and continuous effort constructed islands of inimitable loveliness in the midst of the lonely ocean. So the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, weak and imperfect though its workers may be, is laboring deep down underneath the world's surface; sometimes beaten back by the waves of temptation; losing many of its members in the stream of death; seeking new recruits to carry on the work; toiling, struggling, praying, until at last there shall rise amid the seething ocean of sin a fair island of peace which shall be the holy and beautiful dwelling-place of the great King. "Human weakness is the chosen channel of divine power."

In order to be stimulated to greater activity we require to be filled with enthusiasm. The old derivation of the word is very suggestive—*en theosm*—God in us. There is something very fascinating about a person whose soul is fired with a holy purpose. Take for instance the woman of Samaria. She was probably a poor, uneducated outcast from society, and yet her burning words, "Come see," were the beginning of a great missionary movement in her own country. This is a line of ministry open to every woman. We can go and tell others how the gospel has elevated our own womanhood. We can help to send the word of God to brighten the hopeless lives of weary, down-trodden, suffering women whose only hope of deliverance lies in suicide or the grave.

It seems needless to speak of enthusiasm when delegates are returning home from the annual meeting, inspired with new ideas and fervid zeal. Each one carries back with her the assurance that the sparks which she has gathered from the missionary anvil will kindle a warmer glow of interest in the heart of every woman in the congregation. This illusion is very apt to be dispelled when we try to put our theories into practice. When we begin to encounter difficulties and rub