

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

OUR VACANCIES.

BY PRESBYTER.

The subject of our vacancies is one on which no doubt a considerable amount of reflection has been bestowed by the Church; and there are one or two aspects of the subject to which one's attention is called from time to time by existing circumstances. The length of time that some of our congregations are allowed to remain vacant, for example, must be rather unaccountable to those not acquainted with the working of our boasted Presbyterianism.

If it were the case that we had no probationers, or that we had no ministers, nobly willing at the call of duty to renounce a smaller field and undertake the labours of one much more extended, it would not appear so strange; but when we have these in abundance, especially the latter, it does seem to call for explanation how some of our congregations should remain vacant for one, two, or even three years. It must have been observed that generally the charges that continue so long vacant, are those which are of more importance in the Church, and where one would naturally, but perhaps wrongly imagine, it was most important to have the vacancy speedily filled up. An ignorant person might think he saw in this, one of the evils of congregationalism. He might suppose that Presbyteries would have some influence in preventing this state of things. He might suppose that at least they would do all in their power to prevent it, that they would advise, and remonstrate in the circumstances. He would be surprised doubtless, to know, that they do nothing in such cases, either because they are afraid to interfere, or because they cannot interfere to any good effect.

He would be surprised doubtless to learn, that all that the Presbytery does generally in such cases is, after all the harm such a vacancy can work has been wrought, without the slightest attempt to obviate it, to hinder still further, by round-about forms, the person called from being settled as quickly as he otherwise might be.

The vacancy goes on under a congregational regime, the settlement takes place under Presbyterial direction, even to calling for objections to the minister elect at the most "patent door" of the Church. Whether the Presbytery cannot, or dare not do anything in the circumstances, we will not say, only it is not at all unnatural, that the ignorant person spoken of above, should think that these were circumstances in which it might and would profitably interfere.

But these wealthy and intelligent congregations are generally treated very considerably, and are not lightly to be interfered with; but this state of things arises not only from the lamentable want of men, but also from the highly laudable desire on the part of these congregations to secure the services of some more than ordinary gifted individuals. These congregations desire, and imagine they require, a very high order of spiritual food. Hence, they will hear and dismiss with a sorrowful condemnation, all the probationers and ministers of a church, not finding one among them competent to minister to their high intelligence. It must be painful to the good men in such congregations, to reflect on the lamentable incompetency in the matter of preaching, that prevails in the Church. Not one, in scores, fit to minister to them. But on the other hand it is cheering to them, and to the Church, to reflect that we have congregations in our Church of such rare intelligence, and such high spiritual tastes; but whatever be the reason, whether it be the scarcity of competent men, or an undue sense of self-importance on the part of these congregations, that keeps them so long unsupplied, they deserve our sympathy. Their very superiority to ordinary charges becomes a trial to them. It places them so far above the reach of ordinary ministrations they cannot help being vacant. They regret to see the young leave for other folds, to see strangers coming into the community joining themselves to other denominations, to see the cause of the Church injured in their midst, but better these results than that they should be ministered to by a mere ordinary man, such as other congregations have to submit to.

Now, all these evil results might be patiently borne, if these charges after all their winnowing of the minis-

try, selected as their favoured instructor, some really supereminent man.

But so far as experience shows, this long waiting does not tend to strengthen their faculty of discrimination; and generally they end in getting a very useful and ordinary man, such as they really need. Of course they comfort themselves with the thought that their choosing a man renders that person more illustrious than his neighbours, and there is no harm in their thinking so. But generally to the world outside, this fact that he belongs to that congregation, is the only one that distinguishes him among his brethren. Mean time, in conclusion, one feels these congregations are not only to be pitied, inasmuch as there is no man found competent to preach the gospel to them, but inasmuch as, though unconsciously, they are presenting to the world a spectacle of incompetency, and spiritual pride, and bringing reproach on the Presbyterianism in which they boast.

If the apostle Paul were to appear in our midst, and were able to add to his long list of trials, one more proof of his humility and willingness to suffer in his master's cause, by putting his name on the probationers' list, or accepting a small country charge, I fear it would be sufficient to stamp him as a man unfit to minister to many of the congregations of our Church.

INTELLIGENCE OF FEMALE MISSIONS,

LETTER FROM MISS TREMERE, ONE OF MISS FIGOT'S ASSISTANTS.

Having joined the mission field so very recently, and having had no previous experience of this nature, I will not venture upon a lengthened report of the sphere of work entrusted to me. I joined the Zenana Mission through the kind counsel of your dearly loved lady superintendent, who is an old and esteemed friend of my family, on Nov. 17, 1876, and though so new to the work, and it to me, I can say with truth, that under her wise and fostering direction, I have now, for the first time in my life, known something of pure happiness, for it is the service of our master, Christ,—the work which it was His meat and drink to fulfil,—not finding or seeking in it ease or comfort, but with the constant toil, exhaustion, and often disappointment—yet feeling a sustaining power from the consciousness of my Saviour's loving approval—that is the best guerdon, and sweeter far than all earthly comfort or repose.

The outline of my daily duties is soon sketched: I visit regularly the houses of three families which are entrusted to my sole charge. To these I devote Mondays and Thursdays, as well as inspect on these days two or three of the houses in the charge of native Christian teachers, and this work occupies me the whole of each day. On Friday I have to accompany our lady superintendent to Kidderpore, and hope to derive the benefit of her example in imparting instruction. I have, up to last week, been inspecting native Christian teachers' houses on Fridays also; but since my work has been changed, I visit on an average, twenty-four families a week. Though this work of direct teaching is new to me, yet from my previous acquaintance with many native ladies of good families, whom I was in the habit of visiting as a neighbour, the colloquial language of conversation in the Zenana is not difficult to me, but I have now, besides, begun to study the Bengali language, so as to be able to read and write it. For this purpose, I receive lessons regularly four times a week from the Pundit of our school, and find myself progressing better than I had anticipated. I am now able to help my assistant with beginners. I find my previous habit of making the acquaintance of my native lady friends of essential service to me now, inasmuch as I am able to enter freely into all the questions of their daily life which mostly interest them, and they open their minds to me without any diffidence or hesitation. Their remarks or inquiries are mostly natural and unconstrained; for instance on one occasion, whilst my assistant was explaining to one of the women of the Zenana the parable of the Sower and the Seed, she suddenly said to me, "Ma'am, I hear that Jesus drank water out of the tub in which the cows were fed. If He were so great and good and mighty, and had so much power, why did He hide and not show Himself openly before men?" I stopped the lesson and told my assistant to explain to her the truth of the Saviour's incarnation and the object of his becoming incarnate. The expression of the face showed the pleasure with which she heard the story of "Good news," but in word she simply said, "I will never be tired hearing the gospel story," and this, too,

is my own great source of satisfaction, notwithstanding the newness of the work to me and my own great inexperience—that these poor women, leading such secluded lives, with no knowledge of or interest in the events of the world, to disturb their attention, so gladly welcome the tidings of salvation and seem really to hunger for the Word of Life. This eagerness on their part is to me something new, beautiful and refreshing,—is the source of such pure happiness as I never dreamed of when living for myself and the world.

To take another case, for these little incidents will best illustrate the nature of our Zenana teaching: At a house I inspect, I was giving a writing lesson to the step daughter of the mistress of the house, when the latter came beside me and said, "Ma'am, I wish to hear about Jesus—when will you give the lesson about Him." So I replied, "Now, as soon as your daughter has finished her writing lesson, we will begin the Bible reading." She then said, "I love to hear about your God." I told her there is only one God, as much hers as mine. She sat and listened, full of interest, while my assistant talked to her of our Saviour, and read some simple tale suited to her understanding.

Though these constant rounds are often very fatiguing, yet it is work that I love, and it is work from which I have already learned so much that is good for myself, and I have the constant example and help at hand of our devoted lady superintendent, and from her, under God, we may learn how, out of a good conversation to show our works with meekness of wisdom.

Calcutta.

THE SUPREME COURT.

It is said that St. Andrew's Church, Montreal, is going to appeal to the Privy Council from the Supreme Court of Canada, in "The Great Pew Case." I cannot see how it can do so. The very name "Supreme Court," means one from which there is no appeal. Why do we call the General Assembly the Supreme Court of our Church? Because there is no higher court to which an appeal can be made. A Supreme Court from which an appeal can be taken, is as great a contradiction in terms as a four-sided triangle. But it is said, "No British subject can be debarred from appealing to the highest court in the empire." That is true, but the establishment of the Supreme Court was never meant to deprive any Canadian of this privilege. As appeals to the Privy Council are both very troublesome, and very expensive, the Supreme Court was established for the benefit of those who are willing to abide by its decision. However, after one has gone through all the lower courts, he has the choice of two supreme ones. He can take the Privy Council on the one hand, or the Supreme Court on the other, but whichever he takes, he cannot have recourse to the other. On this understanding, the royal assent was given to the Bill for the establishment of a Supreme Court. Consequently I cannot see how the Privy Council can either lawfully, or honorably, take up a case on which the Supreme Court has given a decision. If an appeal can be taken from the Supreme Court, in what sense is it supreme.

Metis, Que.

T. F.

MISSION WORK ON THE C. P. RAILWAY.

Our readers will remember that an urgent request for a missionary to the labourers along certain sections of the Canada Pacific R. R. was before the last meeting of the Home Mission Committee. The following account of a visit to the locality made by the Rev. James Robertson of Winnipeg, and sent to Dr. Cochrane, will be read with interest. So far the Committee have not secured a missionary. Surely among our licentiates there is to be found at least one willing to go to such an important field.

MY DEAR DR. COCHRANE,—According to promise I send you an account of my visit to section fifteen C.P.R. I left Winnipeg Tuesday, Sept. 25th, by stage, and got as far as Pointe des Chenes the first night. The road was very good with the exception of a few swamps near Winnipeg. On leaving Pointe des Chenes the road ascends from the level prairie fifteen or twenty feet; the soil is light and sandy, and the tops of the ridges covered with boulders. The land is covered with timber, but it is not large enough to be of much value except for fuel and fencing. At noon we stopped at Brokenhead, sixteen miles from Pointe des Chenes, for dinner. There is no house, and we had to "boil the kettle" and depend on our baskets for lunch. Here we overtook two teams conveying to the "Angle" the baggage of about fifty men who were going out to section fifteen. The men were