

forth evil fruit. Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Eph. v. 18, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit," 1 Tim. iii. 8, "Not given to much wine," 1 Tim. v. 23, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities," Titus ii. 3, "Not given to much wine." It would be easy to enlarge to an indefinite extent. I have only referred to some of the most direct passages, and from all that I find in the Bible on the subject, I am driven to the conclusion that prohibition is nothing but a delusion of the evil one, for we are told he is transformed into an angel of light, and he never did show the true light, but a spurious thing, to get us to believe that it is superior to the true light. He is quite pleased that we should make a great external show, but with no internal reality. May He who made the light, shine into all our hearts, that we may know the light. **SCRIPTURE TEMPERANCE.**

SUPPLY AND SETTLEMENT OF VACANCIES

MR. EDITOR,—In preparing their annual report for transmission to the General Assembly, the Committee on Distribution and Supply have found the following very gratifying features among the results of the year's work. The whole number of ministers and licentiates on the roll for the year was forty six. Of this number twenty-three came upon the roll since last Assembly. The whole number removed from the roll during the year was twenty three, of whom eighteen were called and settled, fourteen in "vacancies reporting to the Committee for supply," and four in "vacancies not so reporting," while five have withdrawn to enter upon work in "mission fields and elsewhere."

Though the whole number of vacancies reporting to the committee for supply was much smaller than it should have been, yet of these twenty eight have been settled during the year, fourteen by ministers or licentiates chosen from the Distribution Committee's list, one by a minister who had previously withdrawn from the list to engage in mission work, seven by licentiates and ministers without charge not on the list, and six by ministers called from settled charges.

It will be seen that more than half of the vacancies settled as reported chose as pastors those who had honoured the Assembly's Distribution Scheme. And if it be borne in mind that the vacancies asked and received supply through the Committee for an average of less than half the time, and were supplied for the other half mainly by settled ministers and others not on the committee's list, it will be seen that those going upon the list have competed more than successfully with all others—settled ministers included; while fifteen of those on the list, and only thirteen of all those not on the list have been settled in the twenty eight vacancies that were open for an equal time to each of these two classes. Four additional of those on the list have been called to charges in which they could get only a chance hearing, as these were vacancies that asked for no supply through the committee, but relied wholly upon such as they could secure by private arrangement.

From the above showing it appears that those seeking appointments through the Assembly's Committee are, according to the verdict of vacant congregations, to be preferred to those seeking employment only by private arrangement.

We have not the data at hand from which to institute a full comparison; but are of the opinion that something similar would be found true in the case of congregations; that is to say, that a larger proportion of settlements have taken place among vacancies within the Committee's bounds that have asked for supply through the Committee, than among those not reporting for supply, but relying wholly upon private arrangements. It is worthy of remark also that the vacancies settled by pastors chosen from the Committee's list include important charges in city, town and country, and in some instance these pastors-elect received calls from two or more vacancies before accepting settlement. These are—so far as recent years at least are concerned—new and most gratifying results, and they warrant the committee in hoping that if the recommendations of their annual report for this year shall be adopted by the General Assembly at Halifax, the

day is not far off when all vacancies, as well as all licentiates and others wishing settlement, will be alike glad to have the opportunity of being served by the Assembly's Committee. And if, in addition to adopting the committee's recommendations, the Assembly shall also adopt the "overture on the supply and settlement of vacancies" transmitted by the Synod of Hamilton and London, it may be expected that a new era is at hand in the Church's history, in which speedy settlements will be the rule, and protracted vacancies will be out of the question.

Hamilton, Ont., May 31, 1888. R. J. LAIDLAW.

PROBATIONERS' SCHEME.

MR. EDITOR,—An invitation was given some time ago for suggestions for the improvement of the Probationers' Scheme, as the committee wished to make it as perfect as possible.

I would therefore suggest the following:

1. That the three ministers preaching in a vacancy during each quarter should form a leet, and that the Moderator of Session should be required to hold a congregational meeting each quarter, and it after taking a vote it is found that none of the three have a majority of the congregation, a new leet should be given. If four leets, comprising twelve ministers, have been given and no one commands a majority of the whole congregation, the Presbytery should then make the appointments, changing their ministers as often and no oftener than necessary till the congregation is in a proper frame of mind for a settled pastor.

According to the present practice, it is no matter how acceptable a minister's preaching may be, he is as helpless as the lame man at the pool of Siloam, who had "no man to put him in when the water was troubled." If he has no influence with the Moderator of Session to get a call moderated in, he must wait for another opportunity. He is not allowed to wait for the thirty-eight years, but after two years—no matter if the greater part of his time has been spent in preaching to congregations who have called ministers and he has proved ever so acceptable—he is pronounced incompetent and his name is struck off the roll.

To call a minister in such a position a candidate is an abuse of language. No one can properly be called a candidate unless he is nominated.

By adopting this simple suggestion all the ministers who preach in a vacancy would be really candidates, and they would all have an equal chance. Congregations would then have an opportunity of exercising their right in choosing a minister. According to the present practice they can only do so when the Moderator of Session sees fit to bring a name before them.

Rule 2. For the regulation of the distribution of probationers, passed by last General Assembly, should be amended or expunged. It reads as follows: That the committee have power to withhold appointments from any to whom objections have been made until such time as the Presbytery recommending him shall show cause for his being given his former position."

No grounds are required for the objection, but as far as appears from the rule, however groundless the objection, the minister is condemned and degraded from his position as a minister turned out of employment, and if he can get his case tried before six months he may think himself fortunate. If the objection against him is not sustained he is restored to his former position, but he may have lost from \$200 to \$300 by the affair besides the injury to his reputation.

Can any one point out any good such a rule can do?

If we have any minister who cannot safely be trusted to preach four Sabbaths in a vacancy, it is high time that such were put out of the Church. If any Presbytery certifies a minister as being in good and regular standing, why should any Tom, Dick or Harry or Convener (for there is nothing said about what kind of an objector is required) have the power to depose him from the work of the ministry.

It is utterly incredible that a rule so much at variance with British practice and Bible justice could have ever been passed by such a body of men as compose the General Assembly after mature deliberation. It must have been passed in haste. If this rule were expunged and my other suggestion adopted, the Scheme might be considered on the whole satisfactory.

AMOR JUSTITIÆ.

CANDIDATING.

MR. EDITOR, Candidating affects ministers and it affects congregations. How it humiliates, discourages and sours ministers has been told in your columns. That efforts are being made in the Presbyteries of Brockville and Orangeville to shield ministers from the evils of the system has also been told in your paper. But nothing which you have yet published makes it clear that ministers have yet discovered that these evils are inseparable from the system. It may be that no one has yet written all he has thought and felt. It may be that the men who know most have been deterred by the fear of incurring the contempt even perhaps the jeers of their more successful brethren, from telling their grievances and exhibiting their minds; but I as a layman have no fears to restrain me from telling all I know about our Presbyterian "curse." Above I used the term successful as it is generally used, to describe those who are successful in obtaining calls—not those who are successful as pastors. This success in obtaining calls is a very questionable kind of success; for the system is so decidedly bad that it tempts the candidate, lowers his self respect, and rouses in him all the evil passions which are held up to merited contempt in the expression "ward politician." Often the best man does not succeed.

The excuse for the system is, "They must get a good preacher." Much grumbling about poor preachers has been indulged in by hearers. Much derisive pity has been expended on the same class by their fellow ministers. And now it is being gravely discussed in Church Courts in Scotland, What to "do with" inefficient ministers? If there are inefficient men in our Church, the leading authorities of the Church are to blame. No man can become a minister of the Presbyterian Church without being admitted by a Presbytery, and if any Presbytery has admitted an "inefficient" then let us in imitation of the English Poor Law, return him to that Presbytery, and insist on it providing for him as the only atonement it can make for the terrible wrong it has inflicted on the Church. The Church has induced him to give up his youth to study. The Church has induced him to spend large sums and long years in fitting himself for her service. And the Church points the finger of scorn at the minister not worn out in her service who quits it. Therefore the Church is bound to provide suitable work for the Master to any man she takes the responsibility of licensing, that he may honestly and honourably earn his living. But are there any inefficient men in our ministry? I would like to have this question answered by any one who will state plainly the qualities or want of qualities which make up the "inefficiency." I am free to say after an experience of forty years and an acquaintance with a very large number of ministers—young, old, smart, slow, strong and weak—that I have not met with one who was unfit for doing our Lord good service. Some, no doubt, are "round pins in square holes," but that is the fault of the Church. Will any Presbyterian say that our ministers are worse than those of the Episcopal or Methodist Churches? Yet these Churches have no "inefficient" men and no vacant congregations. Our weak, slow, cumbersome and, because of its consequences, wicked system of weary calling and placing ministers is responsible for all our idle ministers, vacant congregations, and the consequent slow progress of our loved and Christ-glorifying Presbyterian Church.

D. G.

THE PROCESS OF CALLS.

MR. EDITOR,—It does seem queer in THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN to tell the Methodists, as it did lately, that the practice of requiring congregations to call their own ministers is the weakest and poorest part of the Presbyterian system. The process of call by congregations is one of the most excellent parts of our church life. Who wants to settle ministers without the deliberate and active concurrence of the Christian people? Is this the time of day to be craving after the rejected system of patronage, either lay or clerical? The Church may find difficulty in devising a perfect method of distribution, sure to give equal opportunities to all eligible preachers and to all congregations on the outlook for ministers; but even with the partial confusion which obtains at present, substantial justice can easily be done to the rights of all. Woe worth the day when we cease to recommend the principles of Presbyterian order and privilege in the vital matter of the people's call.

J. W.