

our long vacancies. They will doubtless survive the loss. I withhold my name simply that this communication may be taken simply on its merits; and I am ready to prove every statement if necessary.

PRESBYTER.

OVERTURE ON ORDAINED MISSIONARIES.

MR. EDITOR,—Would you kindly print the following overture on ordained missionaries, adopted by majority vote of the Presbytery of Hamilton, supported before the Synod at St. Thomas by Rev. Messrs. Yeomans and Goldsmith, and transmitted to the General Assembly, that members of the Assembly may become acquainted with it before the Assembly meets.

OVERTURE.

Whereas it is desirable in the work of our Church to use the men and means placed in her hands with the greatest wisdom and efficiency;

Whereas the system at present pursued of supplying mission stations in summer only, and of supplying weak congregations by probationers, is not entirely satisfactory;

Whereas frequent and protracted vacancies leave a congregation without pastoral supervision, and thus tend to discourage and scatter our weak congregations;

Whereas to provide against this evil, it seems necessary that the Home Mission Board in connection with the Presbytery should have an oversight of the work;

Whereas the system of ordained missionaries has been found necessary in the North-West, and has been adopted by several Presbyteries in Ontario;

Therefore, it is respectfully overtured that the General Assembly establish a similar system, to be offered to all aid-receiving congregations that may hereafter become vacant, under which ministers may be appointed for such congregations by the Presbytery of the bounds, with the concurrence of the Home Mission Committee, for such periods as may be deemed expedient by the Presbytery.

Also to provide that the names of such students, licentiates, and ministers, as desire appointments to this service, be sent to their Presbyteries, and

That as soon as any aid-receiving congregation, or group of congregations, becomes self-supporting it shall be required to call a pastor.

The evils complained of are admitted by all. The best mode of meeting them, and of making our Church more aggressive in her work is greatly in demand, and if this be not the best mode, perhaps some one will suggest a better. It is believed that this system would secure to our mission groups and supplemented congregations the advantages of continual pastoral oversight without vacancies, would build them up faster to the point of self-support, would be a spur to self-support, and would give employment to our ministers without charge.

GEORGE YEOMANS.

AS an evidence of the march of science it may be mentioned that Dr. Siemens has actually grown strawberries by electricity, and electrical railways have attained a speed of 24 miles an hour. The cost of electricity has been so reduced that an electric car can be worked at a cost of about \$1.50 a day for traction.

MR. GEORGE STEWART, jun., F.R.S.C., editor of the "Quebec Chronicle," and author of "The Administration of Lord Dufferin" and other important works, has been asked to write the articles on Nova Scotia and New Brunswick for the "Encyclopædia Britannica." Mr. Stewart has just concluded the preparation of a critical sketch of Frontenac and his times for an American work and this new mark of confidence in his ability, by the editors of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" is the reward of long years of successful literary work.

THE petitioning of President Grévy to amnesty Prince Krapotkine, recently condemned at Lyons to five years' imprisonment, was suggested by the success with which the efforts of a number of literary and scientific men in England to obtain a similar favour for the celebrated geographer Elisée Récluz, sentenced to transportation for participation in the Commune, was attended. Prince Krapotkine, like his political friend and ally, is distinguished in the scientific world. Hence the sympathy that has been aroused on his behalf amongst certain Englishmen.

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

MY FIRST SUNDAY SCHOOL.

BY W. ORNISTON, D.D., LL.D., IN S. S. TIMES.

I spent several years of a healthy, happy, merry, and mischievous boyhood amid the enchanting, beautiful scenery of Habbie's Howe, a locality celebrated in the dramatic pastoral "The Gentle Shepherd," by Allan Ramsay—which is by far the best, if not the only true, pastoral in the English language, although written in the Scottish dialect of the Lothians, in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The pastoral gives a most minute and graphic picture of the scenery on the North Esk, under the southern slope of the Pentland Hills, about twelve miles south of Edinburgh. Many of the farms on the estate of New Hall, in which the scene of the tale is laid, are named from the poem; such as Patie's Hill, Roger's Rig, Peggie's Lea, and Jennie's Brae. In this way the poem is localized, and the fame of the poem perpetuated. Oft, in my school-boy days, have I sported with my companions, or wandered alone, through the enchanted place, peopled with the swains and lasses of other days. And lately, accompanied by the genial Dr. Crosby, of New York, and my son, I revisited the old homestead and the "Howe," and keenly enjoyed the scene, and all the pleasing memories it recalled.

We obeyed the advice of Jennie to Peggie:—

"Gae far'er up the burn to Habbie's Howe,
Where a' the sweets o' spring and summer grow;
There 'twixen twa birks, out ower a little linn,
The water fa's and makes a singin' din;
A pool-brack deep, beneath as clear as glass,
Kisses wi' easy swirl the bordering grass."

A parody on part of these lines was painted on the sign of a small inn, on the public highway at Nine-mile-Burn:

"Gae far'er down the burn to Habbie's How,
Where a' the sweets o' spring and summer grow;
And when you're tired o' prattlin' side the mill,
Come up to Nine-mile-Burn and take a gill."

My father's farm lay near the village of Carlops (Karlin's Leap), so called from an ancient legend, which tells of one of those weird, unearthly, uncanny beings, who, when pursued, leaped across a deep chasm in the side of the Pentland, and left the impress of his tiny foot imprinted on the rock—a footprint visible to this day; and woe betide the unlucky tourist who fails to give due credence to the veritable chronicle!

The nearest church to this village was at West Linton, a distance of three miles, and few of the villagers attended it. The general character of the population in that rural district was the reverse of devout. Drunkenness and Sabbath desecration prevailed to a lamentable extent; and the religious training of the children was, with few exceptions, almost entirely neglected. The shoemaker of the hamlet, or, as he was called, the "souter," and frequently, by way of ridicule, the "cantin' cobbler," was a Methodist—the only person of that persuasion I had then ever seen, and, so far as I know, the only one nearer than Edinburgh. He was an earnest, zealous Christian, and, though markedly illiterate, well acquainted with the Scriptures and the way of life. He resolved to attempt something in behalf of the neglected children, who were growing up utterly regardless of religion and religious ordinances. Aided by mother, the only person willing to work with him, he opened a Sunday school in his small workshop, which he cleaned and fitted up as well as he could every Saturday night for the purpose. The entire scene is indelibly engraved on my memory. I was at that time in my eleventh year, and I can still recall with vivid, distinct exactness the place, the teachers, and the pupils. The flavour of leather filled the entire room then, and it seems to fill my nostrils now as I write; and I see, with closed eyes, the bright brass-headed nails which surrounded the circular piece of leather on which the shoemaker sat at work during the week, and on which I had sometimes the high honour of sitting on Sabbath; and I remember my mother once kindly rebuked me for counting the nails while the good man's eyes were closed in prayer. At first the number of scholars was very small, but soon rose to thirty or forty; as many as the small room could hold, or the two faithful, conscientious teachers could instruct. I was one of the oldest of the scholars, and was frequently employed to hear the others recite their catechism, and verses of Scriptures and hymns. Thus early did my training for my life's work begin.

The exercises of the school were the reading of a short passage of Scripture, and prayer offered by that good man, or by my mother; sometimes both. I remember with deep unfeigned gratitude to God, and with feelings of reverent tenderness for the memory of those dear servants of God, sainted and rewarded now, how earnest, fervent, and yearning were their pleadings for the souls of the children. Not unfrequently the good man would take me all alone with him and pray for me by name. This deeply affected me, and touched my heart, and filled my eyes. True, these impressions, like a morning cloud, passed away, but, like that cloud, they left an influence which is on me still. After the devotional exercises were over, the time was mainly spent in hearing the children recite from memory hymns, the catechism, and large portions of Scripture. The scholars were encouraged "to get by heart" as many verses as they could by giving them reward tickets, which were exchanged for picture cards and little books when a sufficient number had been obtained. My memory at that time was ready and retentive, and some weeks I would commit whole chapters, amounting to two hundred verses or more. On one occasion I repeated the whole of Psalm cxix. When a number of the scholars had many verses, the recitation had either to be postponed, or a few of us had to be detained until we had repeated the whole. Before dismissing the school our teacher gave us a brief, simple, affectionate address, telling us about the love of Jesus, and the way of salvation through Him. These seed thus sown and watered did not, could not fail of producing fruit: to what extent the day will reveal when that reviled and taunted follower of the Lamb shall stand before Him surrounded by those whom his untiring, unwearyed and unappreciated labours led to the Saviour.

Half a century ago Sunday schools were not popular in Scotland, and not a few of the parish ministers did not approve of them, and even went so far as to discourage them. In many rural districts they were wholly unknown, and were one was sustained, those who taught it were regarded as fanatical or righteous over-much. What a contrast in this respect the present offers to the past; for now, I suppose there is not a parish or village in all Scotland where this agency of the church is not in vigorous activity. The methods of teaching, and the varied facilities of books, lessons and lesson helps for both teachers and scholars have been greatly changed, improved and increased. But I cannot think otherwise than that a loss is sustained when a catechism is not accurately recited and taught, and passages from the Word of God, more extended than one or two verses, are not committed to memory. I am glad that my memory in childhood was strengthened and filled with the mother's catechism, the "Shorter Catechism," the Psalms of David, the Sermon on the Mount, the entire Gospel by John, and the Book of Proverbs, as also with many excellent hymns.

Let every earnest, devoted teacher be encouraged, and let him cast his bread hopefully upon the waters; it will appear after many days. The humble, saintly man in a small Scottish village, after my mother, was my first teacher in theology, and did much to form the character of the pastor of to-day.

"Teacher—in that infant mind
Heaven presents to thee a soil;
Be thy seeds of goodly kind,
So shall blessing crown thy toil.

"God of grace! the sower bless,
God of love! enrich the field;
So shall human happiness
Glory to the Giver yield.

"Mortal! ne'er complain of dearth,
Since to thee the boon is given,
Seeds of truth to sow on earth
For the harvest-home of Heaven!"

Be patient, dear brethren, your works will follow you. Be earnest in teaching the word; encourage your scholars to treasure it in their memories. It is good alike for the understanding and the heart. It will prove a lamp unto their feet and a light upon their path. Be assured that that wayward and seemingly inattentive boy, who causes you no little anxiety and uneasiness, will, if spared, live to bless you or cherish your memory, as I now do that of the dear Christian man who so patiently and faithfully sought to guide my boyish steps to Jesus. A child saved through your labours will be a brilliant star in your crown—and in your Master's too. You are a co-worker with Him, and, if faithful, you will enter into His joy and share His throne.