

Our Contributors.

ON SUGGESTING SOMETHING BETTER.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Our congregation is cold, very cold, says Mrs. Gusher. Well, suggest something to make it warmer. If you, Mrs. Gusher, are a member of the congregation you are just as much responsible for its coldness as anybody else. Suggest something to warm the congregation or let your unruly member take a vacation on congregational affairs.

Our prayer meeting is not up to the mark, says Mr. Shallow Remark. It is not, eh? Well, suggest something that will bring it up to the mark, and then help to carry out your own suggestion. It is not likely the powers above will allow you to live as long as Methuselah lived, but if you did continue to rattle commonplaces about the prayer-meeting for nine centuries, that would not help it any. Suggest something sensible.

The singing is not what it ought to be. Probably not, Mr. Growler. There are not many things in this world what they ought to be. Even you, Mr. Growler, are not what you ought to be or might be. No doubt you think you are a living, perambulating contradiction of the question of the Shorter Catechism. There, now, we just thought you knew what that question is. You, yourself, are a long way from what you ought to be. You never lived one day as you ought to have lived it. If the singing or anything else is not what it ought to be, suggest something practical to make it better.

Tea-meetings, socials and all gatherings of that kind should be abolished, says Mr. Straight Lace. Perhaps they should and perhaps they will be as soon as any one suggests something better to take their place. No one denies that the social life of a congregation should be developed. There should be some way by which people who worship in the same church can meet occasionally, and by which strangers can become acquainted. Any one who thinks present methods are no good should suggest something better. Mere growling never mends anything.

Once upon a time we told an editor who has a level head—all editors have not heads of that kind—that we intended writing a series of papers showing in a strong, clear light some of the evils connected with the Presbyterian method of settling ministers. As a sort of foretaste of the coming feast of reason and flow of strong facts, we told him we would discuss such points as the effects of candidating upon the ministry and upon the vacancy: that we would prove by the testimony of leading men in many congregations that the giving of a call to a minister is often a mere matter of chance depending on a great variety of circumstances; that we could prove that calls are often got up by a few, and that many sign not because they want the minister, but for other reasons—some for peace—some because they are weary of the vacancy—some because they are asked and don't like to refuse, and some for no particular reason at all. We also said we might perhaps give some rather startling facts about calls that came out in this way: A minister is called and settled, and the call is a mystery to outsiders. He fails, fails utterly, and active men in the congregation begin to ask who brought him here? Then the inner history of the thing comes out, and people know exactly how the man was called and who pulled the wires. When we had finished a summary of the points we meant to discuss, the editor coldly remarked: "That is no doubt all true, but can you suggest anything better?" We didn't write that series of articles. The material is all ready and partly put into shape, but not a line of it will go into type until we can suggest something better. The evils of the system are painfully apparent, and are doing our Church no small amount of injury, but there is no use in holding up the evils to the world unless a remedy can be suggested.

At this season of the year we always hear a good deal about the alleged failure of our Ontario system of municipal government. It is said by many that it has broken down in large towns and cities. Perhaps it has. Let those who think so suggest something better. Baldwin never pretended to provide a system that would work for all time and in all places. His legislation for local self-government was one of the greatest boons ever conferred upon Ontario. As Mr. Mowat remarked not long ago, no system was ever worked more successfully by any people than the people of Ontario have worked their municipal system. Now let those who say municipal government is a failure suggest something better when the municipal meetings are being held a few weeks hence.

The kind of municipal government some people want is a system that will provide sidewalks, streets, light, water and police protection without any money. They are just like the people in church who think that preaching, singing, light, heat, cushioned seats and several other things should be furnished free. In Church and State those people expect something for nothing. In fact they expect a great deal for nothing. Just why they should expect other people to give them a great deal for nothing no one can imagine. Anybody who is dissatisfied with the plan of honestly paying for everything people get should suggest a better plan. Several plans have been tried, but most of them have not been satisfactory to the constitution of this country.

Complaints with our Ontario school system sometimes crop out. Let the man who thinks the system very imperfect

suggest something better. No doubt the authorities will be willing to hear him if he has anything to say worth hearing.

There is always a considerable amount of grumbling about the administration of justice. A goodly number of business people act on the principle that any settlement is better than a lawsuit. The expression "law is not always justice" is often found on the lips of men a long way above the chronic grumbler or fault-finder. Even the best of men are sometimes slow to admit that there is anything better in the courts than a rough approximation to justice. All this may be true, but what can you do about it? Let some one suggest a better way of settling difficulties than by referring them to an impartial judge and jury with a skilled advocate to state in the strongest way each side of the case.

There is a vast amount of rant and no small amount of cant heaped upon party government. Have any of those professed purists who talk about partyism ever suggested anything better? The wisest and most patriotic statesmen in the world are party men, and seem to think that though party government, like everything human, has its drawback, on the whole it is the best arrangement we can have. There is something supremely ludicrous in the spectacle of a tenth-rate clergyman who cannot work his own congregation, or a third-class schoolmaster who cannot keep order in his school inveighing against party government, while statesmen, like Gladstone and Palmerston and Bright and Cobden, could suggest nothing better.

We are not as familiar with the date of the millennium as some of our friends are. We can, however, suggest something that would hasten that happy period. Let every man who cannot suggest some remedy for evil, real or imaginary, keep his mouth shut.

POINTE-AUX-TREMBLES MISSION SCHOOLS.

MR. EDITOR,—We seize with pleasure this opportunity to tender the supporters of our mission the most hearty thanks of the pupils and teachers of the Pointe-aux-Trembles schools for the great transformation which their generosity has effected in the girls' building during the past summer.

We are confident that if all those who have contributed towards this most important improvement could now visit our school buildings, it would be with a feeling of deep satisfaction when comparing their cheerful appearance with their former dilapidated condition. They would see that they have not worked nor prayed in vain, but that their simultaneous efforts have raised high the level of this institution.

It has always been our conviction that our mission schools—with the principles of the Gospel for their foundation,—must occupy a dignified position among the educational establishments of the Province of Quebec if they would successfully remove all the prejudices that are constantly cast upon them by the enemies of a true and sound education.

For over one month our school has been in full operation and since the re-opening every day is bringing us new recruits. We have at present one hundred and forty-one pupils, of whom eighty-three are boys and fifty-eight girls. We expected a good many more by this time but no less than fifty-three of those we agreed to admit have failed to come. The new impulse given to our work has aroused the vigilance and the opposition of the clergy to such a degree that they seem to be ready to make any sacrifice or concession which could prevent the coming of their young people to our school. However, the proportion of Roman Catholics among our pupils has seldom been larger, about one-half being children of parents who still adhere to the doctrines of Romanism.

Our pupils are divided into four classes, taught by six teachers, including the principal and the directress, Miss Vessot.

The junior class and the second class have five and a-half hours recitation every day, the third and the fourth classes six and a-half hours, sometimes seven and a-half.

They all rise at 5.30 a.m., and retire, the juniors at eight, the others at nine, except the advanced class, who study till eleven p.m.

Every morning we have a Bible lesson attended by all the pupils together. The subjects taught in the school, in both French and English, are the following: Bible, reading, writing, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, grammar, composition, literature, Latin, Greek, geography, history of Canada, general history, history of England, drawing, music, elocution.

On Sabbath we have regular services morning and evening and the Sabbath school at three p.m. The prayer meetings on Wednesday evening and on Sabbath morning are generally conducted by the pupils themselves.

I am happy to say that we never had a more promising class of pupils and that their good behaviour and their good dispositions are to all the teachers a great source of encouragement.

Those of our young people who have been employed in our mission field during summer continue in the school their missionary work, and their influence among their companions is very good.

Everything seems to indicate that this session is going to be one of good results. Many of our pupils are well-disposed to receive the Gospel and others most desirous to go and speak about Jesus to those of our countrymen who are yet in darkness.

We do everything in our power in order to encourage them in that direction and prepare them for the glorious work to which the Master is calling them. But there is a part of that

preparation which depends less upon education than upon the direct action of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, and we beg of you, dear friends, to unite your prayers to ours to ask the Lord for His special blessing upon our dear pupils. Yours respectfully,

J. BOURGOIN, *Principal.*

December, 1890.

P.S.—To meet the expense of furnishing the new buildings some of the Sabbath schools and friends supporting pupils are this year sending a special contribution over and above their regular amount. An average extra contribution of fifteen dollars from each would suffice, and it is most important that the entire indebtedness be removed before the close of the year. All contributions should be sent direct to the treasurer, addressed Rev. Dr. Warden, 198 St. James Street, Montreal.

PAINFUL REtrosPECTS—SOME SILVER LINIA NEVERTHELESS.

It is well known that in many parts of this country our Church is not nearly so strong as it ought to be, and as it would have been had missionaries gone in earlier. For a generation past we have not lost much by such neglect. At an earlier period we did lose to a serious extent. The writer of this article has had some experience in several of the Provinces of the Dominion. He has seen in various regions, districts which if they had been attended to in time would to-day have been strongholds of our Church, but now we are barely known; in some cases we are without a name or a place. The causes and circumstances of such a disastrous state of things need not be detailed here. It is none the less a painful thing to contemplate what might have been. The people were not to blame. They could not have done anything else if they were not to lapse into godlessness. Other denominations were not to blame because they ministered to these people. We would have done the same had we been in their place.

Within a very brief period past the writer paid a visit to such a district as is described above. He was sent there by the Presbytery to see if even at this late day we were called on to go in and begin a cause. There is a thriving village at the place. It was long looked upon as in the back country, but several years ago a leading line of railway passed through, and at a later date a branch was completed to it. We have not heretofore been represented there. It seems as if none of our missionaries ever had a service there. If one was held it was in a casual way. No steps were taken to plant our name. Among others that have lately settled in the place was a valued family of my own. From the time that this family began to think of making an abode there, we had many a conversation about what was possible to be done so that they would not be wholly cut off from the Church of their birth and convictions. It was plain that it would be a cruel wrench to their feelings to be merged in any other denomination. When the matter came up for consideration in Presbytery it was natural that I should be chosen to spy out the land. I had never been there before. Besides this family I knew none of the residents, even the name of anybody there was a blank. In pursuance of the appointment I went there and spent a Sabbath. A hall to hold service in that day was secured. We had two services, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. There were not less than three hundred at each service. I did not say one word about churches or church connections. I did not say there would be another service, at least I do not remember that I did. I simply preached the Gospel to those that came. Of course I recognized the fact that many of those who came that day belonged to the existing denominations in the place, and will continue to do so. At the same time students who have been there since have had as large an audience as I had. I talked with some of the people and found that many of the fathers and mothers were from County Down, Ireland, which, with the county of Antrim, is the strongest region of our Church in that island. An excellent old lady called on me between the services. During the interview she told me she was from Crawfordsburn. This is a small village on the shore of Belfast Lough, between Holywood and Bangor. When I told her that I had been in Crawfordsburn several times, she held up her hands, partly in doubt as to whether I had not made a mistake, and partly in joyful surprise. To prove to her that I had made no mistake, I named several of the places in the vicinity and some of the people that lived there. Her look at me as I mentioned these places, as one who had been in the place of her birth, a place she had not seen for well nigh half a century, but loved still by every fibre of her heart, and especially when I named the ministers that preached there in her time, I shall not soon forget. The broad Doric of Down is still on her tongue. She was supremely happy, poor old woman. No doubt she has felt keenly her deprivation of such ordinances as she was familiar with in the days of her youth. Not that she has held aloof from such ordinances as were available to her. She was not so foolish as that. I was glad to find that for well nigh thirty years she has been a member of a Church there, and has adorned her profession. Nevertheless the Sabbath I was there was a red-letter one to her, a day of heaven upon earth. To be privileged to join once again in singing the Psalms that she sang in her girlhood and young womanhood may seem to some a very trifling matter. Unsentimental people may despise such associations. Others of us look upon it in a different light. All her neighbours did not adapt themselves to their surround-