

Our Contributors.

AN EXPERIMENT WORTH TRYING.

BY KNOWNIAN.

We read somewhere the other day of a novel method adopted by a mother to make peace among her boys. The little chaps quarrelled occasionally, just as we all used to do when we were boys. Discarding the time-honored use of the slipper this good woman asked her boys to stop quarrelling, sit down quietly and join in singing a pleasant song or hymn. The innovation worked admirably. It had a much more soothing effect than the use of an organ has upon a Gaelic congregation. The boys ceased being angry and rose up to play in the best of humor.

It might be objected by people of a conservative turn of mind that putting music in the place of the slipper, or the strap, or the birch, or the ferule is a dangerous innovation. It might also be urged that music is not so impressive as any of the foregoing appliances. The old methods made a striking impression and the effect sometimes remained for a considerable time. In favor of the innovation it might be said that the result was good. The boys were pacified and that was the main thing arrived at. Authority might also be quoted in favor of the musical method. Has not somebody said that

"Music charms the savage breast."

The slipper never charmed anybody. Some of our readers may remember that they never were much charmed by the application of the birch. As charmers the strap and the ferule were a pronounced failure.

It is not our purpose, however, to discuss the comparative merits of these various methods of making peace among boys. We simply wish to suggest the adoption of the musical method among men. If the plan works well among boys, why not try it among boys of larger growth. If it was a marked success in the family alluded to, might it not be equally successful in Parliament, in the General Assembly, in Presbyteries, and in all other deliberative bodies, political or ecclesiastical.

Some day when Sir John Thompson and Sir Richard Cartwright are indulging in their usual complimentary exchanges, Mr. Speaker might slowly rise and in his blandest tones say, "Hon. members will please join in singing

"Mary had a little lamb."

Brother Foster will please lead." Now who will venture to say the plan might not work well. Just imagine the whole Commons of Canada—Tories, Grits, Independents and all joining in that peaceful little ditty, "Mary had a little lamb." The singing of that little ditty might bring about a much-needed change in the tone of parliamentary proceedings.

Owing to the introduction of racial and sectarian questions and the establishment of semi-political secret societies in the Province the tone of the Ontario Legislature is a long way from what it ought to be and might be. Ontario is one of the best little countries in the world and might have and ought to have one of the best Legislatures in the world. Providence has done much for us, but the more that Providence does for us, the more some of the people seem determined to worry and hate one another in the sacred name of religion. Some day when Mr. Dryden and Mr. Clancy are growing angry over such questions of high statesmanship as tuberculosis in calves, that model Speaker and most generous of men Mr. Ballantyne might say, "Honorable members will please rise and sing

"Let dogs delight to bark and bite."

Brother Marter will kindly start the tune." Just imagine the fine effect that would be produced as the ninety members—Tory, Grit, Patron and P.P.A.—made the roof of the new building quiver with their loud resounding notes. Grit members, with a fine view to the fitness of things, might adapt some of the lines to the situation, and, pointing to the front Opposition row, sing lustily,

"Your little hands were never made
To tear out Hardy's eyes."

For use in the Public Accounts Committee this would be a suitable line to strike up,

"Birds in their little nests agree."

It is sadly true that parliaments are not the

only places in which men forget themselves. Some of our church courts are at times little if anything better.

It goes unsaid that Dr. George Leslie McKay will be the next Moderator of the General Assembly. Dr. McKay is a man of original methods. Should the Supreme Court grow angry over deficits in the funds or over the heresy trial that is pretty certain to take place, how would it do for the missionary Moderator to say, "Fathers and brethren, stop this work and join in singing,

"Blest be the tie that binds'."

FORMS OF WORSHIP: AN IMPROVEMENT NEEDED.

MR. EDITOR,—It must have occurred to many of those who are members or adherents of the Presbyterian Church, that a great deal might be done to make its services brighter and more attractive, so that while not detracting from the true spirit of worship that we should offer our best to the Lord. We may retain a hold on the young people, who are so liable to wander away to other churches where the services are brighter and more attractive. At the time of the Reformation, so anxious were the fathers to get away as far as possible from everything that savored of prelacy or popery, that they adopted a form of worship severely simple, and which, while it might be the best for those days, is out of keeping with the æsthetic spirit of the present age. The church is not prepared for a liturgy, perhaps; it is not desirable under any conditions to have one, but might there not be a form of service, prepared by a select committee of the General Assembly, suggestive rather than imperative, and sufficiently elastic to meet the varying circumstances of individual congregations? Such should provide for the people taking a more active part in the service, instead of leaving nearly everything to the minister, as is now done under the form followed in most of our churches.

Having had occasion not long since to spend some time in Buffalo, I attended, while there, the First Presbyterian Church, of which Rev. Dr. Mitchell is pastor. A form of service was in use there which struck me as very beautiful and appropriate. I presume it was specially prepared for the use of that congregation, for others in the city used forms differing from it. Let me give an idea of it.

While the congregation was assembling an organ prelude was played, followed by an anthem. The service proper then commenced with a few sentences from scripture, the congregation standing, followed by the doxology, a prayer, the creed, prayer, and ending with the Lord's Prayer, the doxology, creed and Lord's Prayer being repeated by all.

The Hundredth Psalm was then chanted, after which the Ten Commandments were read by the minister, the choir chanting the responses, then followed a prayer, then a hymn, which the choir alone sang, then a lesson from the Psalter, the authorized version being used, minister and people reading alternately. The Psalms are arranged to cover the fifty-two Sundays of the year, and are printed in the form of service in alternate roman and italic, so that each could distinguish their part readily. Then the choir sang the Gloria, a particularly beautiful rendering of it being used. Next followed the scripture lesson, Dr. Mitchell usually selecting a number of short passages. After another prayer the collection was taken, and in connection with this was followed a practice which I would like to see introduced into all our churches. We do not sufficiently regard giving as an act of worship, but look upon it too often as a sort of necessary business transaction which has to be attended to. But in Dr. Mitchell's church (and others as well) the elders advance with the plates to the front and stand there reverently while a short dedicatory prayer is offered, after which the minister receives the plates with the offerings and places them on the table.

The announcements are then made, a hymn is sung and the sermon follows. At the close comes another hymn (frequently omitted), followed by prayer and the benediction.

While the congregation is passing out an organ voluntary is played, and the choir sometimes sing an anthem, in which case the congregation remain seated till its close.

The music formed a very important part of this service, and is rendered by a quartette choir, as in so many of the churches in the United States, yet the congregation join heartily in the doxology, chants, and, with one exception, in the hymns, though I think the latter are not used freely enough in the service.

With such a beautiful form there is no danger of the young people straying away to other churches because the service is not attractive, while the true spirit of worship was evident by these. I am sure none of our congregations would suffer from such "innovations" as the repetition of the creed and the Lord's Prayer and the responsive reading of the Psalms. Perhaps the difficulty about the incorporation of the Psalter with the hymns might be got over by the use of them in the manner suggested.

I was pleased to see that this subject was brought before the Toronto Presbyterian Council at a recent meeting in the form of a paper. I trust the suggestions therein contained will be acted upon.

Yours, etc.,

J. JONES BELL.

CAST-OFF CONGREGATIONS.

MR. EDITOR,—The discussion as to cast-off ministers has apparently come to an end, but it may well be doubted whether any of the writers really touched the root of the evil. Ministers you know are chary about touching the heart of the question when the blame lies chiefly with themselves. Will you kindly give space now for a letter or two from the view point of the congregations.

The theory is, the ministry for the church. But in practice it is too often the church for the ministry. The fact is well known that many of the applications for "hearings" in "desirable" vacancies come from settled ministers. What does this mean? It means in plain English that a large number of the ministers are ready to cast off their congregations if only they can obtain a "call" to charges they think better. Frequently, too, while seeking a change the effort is made to do so without the knowledge of their congregations. Generally, however, these things leak out, and it is difficult to convince congregations that such a course is either fair or honorable. The practical effect can easily be imagined. If the ministers look out for themselves without much regard for their congregations, very soon this spirit gets into the congregations that they too must look after themselves, and sometimes this leads to action not characterized by much regard for the minister. Such a state of affairs is indeed deeply to be regretted. Still it is not fair to look only at the one side. It makes all the difference whose ox is gored. If the congregations are cast off, they must bear it meekly and submissively. But if the ministers are cast off, what an outcry about the harshness or heartlessness of the congregations. Is it the ministry for the church? Or is it the church for the ministry? If there is harshness or heartlessness, it is not all on the one side. There is no use seeking to evade the fact; the ministers are themselves largely responsible for the evil so greatly to be deplored.

Another point, there are times when a change would be better, even though the minister fails to see it and has no desire to go. And a good many congregations have the impression that when any change is proposed or when "difficulty" arises, the Presbytery will side with the minister. Presbyterian oversight is strikingly inefficient, and, rightly or wrongly, the notion widely prevails that the exercise of Presbyterian authority is apt to be one-sided. If a minister desires a change, the Presbytery generally makes it easy for him to go, even though his congregation may plead earnestly for his remaining. But if the congregation desires a change, the Presbytery often makes it far from easy to effect the change if the minister does not wish to go. A formidable "deputation" is sent in this case to visit the congregation, and they are reminded of the very serious thing it is to sever the pastoral tie, but there is no deputation sent in the other case, and probably not a word about the seriousness of severing the pastoral tie. Is it the ministry for the church, or the church for the ministry?

Congregations want fair treatment at the hand of ministers and Presbyteries. It is deplorable if they are driven to the conclusion that Presbyteries are one-sided and they must contend for their rights. It is true—sadly, unfortunately true—that their treatment of the minister is sometimes not as kindly as it ought to be. Still it must not be forgotten that there are cast-off congregations as well as cast-off ministers, and perhaps in considerably larger numbers. And probably the remedy lies in that tone of kindness and fairness and honorable treatment which is taught from the pulpit being exemplified with scrupulous care by the ministers and Presbyteries in their relation to the congregations.

ALAN.

UNREST IN THE CHURCHES.

MR. EDITOR, You have asked for discussion under the above caption. Here is a plan that has been in my mind for years. I believe that it would remove a great deal of the uneasiness. Of course we may expect uneasiness so long as "My thoughts are not your thoughts." But I believe some of the evils would be removed by the plan of which I give a brief below.

As churches become vacant, let Presbytery take them in hand at once and firmly. Give each congregation or charge six months in which to select a pastor. If at the end of that time they have not yet made choice, Presbytery shall place a man in charge for five years. If the field calls during the six months, the pastor shall have charge for seven years. After the end of four years in one case, or six in the other, the session shall invite some neighboring minister to preside at a regularly called meeting of the congregation. The minister presiding shall ask, "Do you wish to retain the services of your pastor after the end of the present year?" If the answer is favorable it shall be reported to Presbytery, when, if that body deem it wise, he shall be continued in charge for seven years longer. If the answer should be unfavorable the minister has one year to look about, and the people have the same time to hear ministers eligible to a call, either in their own pulpit, or by a committee visiting his church.

If the pastor should be called a second or third time he goes on with the work with the consciousness that he has the sympathy of his people. At any time, however, the pastor has the right to resign and may be released by Presbytery if he is able to give good and sufficient reasons. The congregation shall also have the right of petition. When any considerable number of the members in good standing in that church feel that a change is desirable they may petition Presbytery, giving their reasons, for the removal of the pastor.

All vacancies, probationers, and ministers who are to move at the end of the year, shall be under the care of a Committee of Synod.

The end of the first pastorates under this scheme shall coincide with the end of the ecclesiastical year then current.

In case a minister is not called during his last year, to his own or some other charge, he shall be settled in some of the vacancies, and in case a field has not called, one of the last mentioned ministers may be placed in such field.

This system shall not affect any relations now existing between pastor and charge, but shall come into effect in every case where a vacancy occurs after it has been adopted by the General Assembly.

ONE WHO SUFFERED.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRESBYTERIAN UNION.

MR. EDITOR,—As President of the Young People's Presbyterian Union of Toronto, I desire to bring to the notice of your readers a matter of great importance. Three or four years ago the Union inaugurated a scheme, whereby the ministers of our Church outside of this city were requested to notify the officers of the Union or some of the city pastors of the departure of any of their young people from their congregations to make even a temporary home in Toronto. The purpose of the Union was to throw around these young people helpful influences from the very time of