

The Presbyterian College Journal.

Vol. IV.]

MONTREAL, OCTOBER, 1883.

[No. 1.

Bochim.

(Adapted from Keble.)

When sunny skies begin to lower
And troubles fall a drenching shower
And all our songs are still,
Then from afar on God we cry
Our souls with many a tear and sigh
Would climb His holy hill.

But should the mist of woe roll by
Not showers across an April sky
Drift, when the storm is o'er,
Faster than these false drops and few
Fleet from the heart, a worthless dew
Upon a sandy shore.

Among earth's sorrows old and new
What sadder sight can angels view
Than self-deceiving tears
Poured idly over some dark page
Of earlier life, though pride or rage
The record of to-day engage
A woe for future years.

Angels, that round the sick man's bed
Watched, noting down each prayer he made,
Each vow and sigh and tear:
Were you, within yon festive hall,
To trace your record on the wall,
How would we sink in fear.

A. B. MACKAY.

The Itineracy: Its Disadvantages.

MUCH attention has of late years been given to the question of the settlement of Pastors over congregations; and the advantages and disadvantages of the various systems of itineracy, episcopacy, and of election by the people, are liberally discussed by the church-going people of the day. Some would insist upon our following the procedure of the church in the days of the apostles, which seems to be very clearly shown in the New Testament, Acts, vi, 1-6. Yet others again assert that we are not necessarily bound to conform to apostolic usage in this matter, that "Ecclesiastical arrangements belong to the department of expediency." The question of expediency would seem to be a relevant one, when we consider the great diversity of taste among people, not only of different lands, but even of the same country. It will be readily admitted that ideas and procedures, which obtain in Great Britain in church matters, would signally fail to commend themselves to the great majority on our continent; while every day we see around us how various are the tastes and the doctrines of those who are professedly tending to the same goal of Christian faith and hope? I feel constrained to say that the general taste of our land in this respect is one which prefers novelty and youth to age and experience; brilliancy and intellectual genius to piety and modesty. I fear it might be even further amplified in this direction, and be

characterized as placing self before church, personal feeling before public charity. To meet in the best way this prevailing taste is the problem which involves the question above.

The system of Itineracy, as we now accept the term, owed its origin to the peculiar circumstances of the followers of Wesley. The mass of the English people in his day were very illiterate, and he was obliged to select his preachers from among them, the cultured, with few exceptions, having held aloof from him. Wesley's preachers were consequently not qualified to make a lengthened stay in any congregation, the very style of preaching which they adopted requiring a frequent change. As the pastors in the church became more educated, and better trained for the ministry, the period of stay was gradually lengthened. Among the disadvantages of Itineracy are said to be the following:

1. It is injurious to the spiritual growth of the people, subject as it is to the disturbing influence of a constant change. No two men are exactly alike, or follow exactly the same modes of work, and, therefore, on each change of administration, there is as it were a cessation of growth in the minds of the people, until they become settled down to the new order of things. And if they have enjoyed the luxuriant growth of a summer sun under the ministration of a thorough Christian working man, or a popular preacher, to be followed by the autumnal breezes of some clouded genius, a winter of discontent is ushered in at once, which not only withers all the shoots which had just appeared, but even injures the very root which gave them life. And at best the people are in a state of abnormal expectation and impatience, and their minds are drawn away from the cultivation of the graces in their hearts to the work of comparing the respective merits of their present, past and future ministers: for howsoever our own garden is cultivated, our neighbor's must be carefully attended to.

2. The people have practically no voice in the selection of their minister. It is an infringement on the members' rights, which even they themselves are not entitled to abnegate, which none of them would for a moment alienate in the management of his worldly concerns. No farmer would ever allow the ingathering of his summer harvest to depend upon a man whom he had never seen or known until sent to him; nor would the blacksmith accept for his apprentice a boy in the same way. How infinitely more important then in matters which concern our spiritual and everlasting welfare, that we should enjoy the application of that principle which we feel to be absolutely necessary to our temporal well-being. And while no evil may result from this cause, in cases where the minister secures the confidence and support of those to whom he is sent, yet when he finds these to be wanting, the discomfort and anomaly of his position are enhanced by considerations involving the manner in which he has come to be their pastor; while on the part of the people indifference quickly bears its ample