

evening he felt an inward impulse to re-enter the house, notwithstanding his mother's decided order. When her son ventured into the sick room, the poor woman held out her hand to him, saying, "Well, my son, I shall respect your convictions, while you will respect mine; stay with me to close my eyes." The report adds one detail more. In that struggle between his convictions and affection for his mother, the thought that his refusal to recite idolatrous prayers might cost him the loss of his patrimony did not once cross his mind.

SCHOOLS.

At Catania more than 100 pupils almost all Roman Catholics, attend the day school, and the greater number the Sunday school also. The schools of Rio-Marina, were specially blessed last year. After a careful examination a member of Parliament expressed his great satisfaction to the government inspector who replied, "Yes, we owe much to the Waldensian Church, for the benefit she has bestowed upon our country by her schools, in which our children received a good education." A Roman Catholic mother who had been present at one of the *fiets*, said in reference to the *fiets* of the communal school, "How could these *fiets* appear to be without a hymn, with nothing of the love of God in them." "We entrust our children to you without fear," was the avowal of some Neapolitan Catholic parents, "because we are sure that in your schools they will learn nothing but what is good. We know you teach them to love God, their home and their country, and that you put them on their guard against blasphemy and falsehood."

COLPORTEGE.

An important part of the mission of the colporteurs is to act as pioneers for the evangelists; in consequence, they have sometimes to neglect the sale of books for a time, and to halt wherever a little nucleus of persons can be found desirous of reading and hearing the Word of God. In consequence many new stations have been opened. A Bible waggon is employed to peripatrate the provinces in Italy, and the numbers who have heard the Gospel in consequence of this agency, may be reckoned by thousands. It is said to be a costly means, but one which succeeds where other plans fail. The Bible readers and Bible women employed at Venice, Milan and Naples, act an important part in the work of Italian evangelization. Taking the lowest estimate of the sale of Bibles during the past thirty years of religious liberty, they will amount, at the least to 600,000 copies. At Milan a mothers' meeting has been commenced and has been blessed; but the report states that this is a work of special delicacy, and requires a tact which every one does not possess. "What a glorious thing would it be, and how advantageous to our mission," concludes this interesting story, "could we have a Bible woman of the right sort in every town."

Dresden, 13th March, 1881.

T. H.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF PROBATIONERS.

MR. EDITOR,—The scheme propounded in THE PRESBYTERIAN of the 11th inst. for the distribution of probationers has one feature most worthy of commendation, viz., that it contemplates the formation of synodical committees for this purpose. This step at decentralization cannot fail, if adopted by the Assembly, to give satisfaction both to the Church at large and to the parties interested. Such committees will certainly be acquainted with the circumstances of the congregations requiring supply, and in course of time with the supplies themselves. Their fields will, besides, be sufficiently extensive to afford variety of conditions and means of adaptation to meet the respective cases of congregations and probationers. It will also limit the distance and the cost of travel, which gave so much dissatisfaction in the past. Another good feature of the plan is that Presbyteries are not required, or as the terms are, "may decline," to put any particular vacant congregation on the list. There are congregations, especially in our cities, that will, under any circumstances, insist on finding their own supply, and there is no reason why they should not have this liberty, or why Presbyteries should not grant sessions this liberty. The session has indeed a constitutional right to this liberty. Another commendable feature is that no congregation shall be required to accept any supply that may be sent them. In many instances great injury has been done and much discontent created by attempts at forcing unacceptable supply upon vacancies.

While allowing these good points in the proposed plan, there are other features which appear objectionable, and which it has in common with the old plan. Why should the time, during which probationers and ministers without charges can be placed on the roll, be limited to two years, or one year, or be limited at all? I presume that this rule means that after a probationer has been two years, and a minister one year on the roll, their names are dropped unless a request comes from a Presbytery that they should be still further retained. But the meaning of this rule is by no means clear. Whatever be the meaning of it, is it just either to the probationer or to the minister without a charge? Does it not by a sort of side wind deprive them of the liberty and power to preach? Does it not place them virtually beyond the pale of the Church? Does it not inflict without trial, and it may be without cause, the severest censure on men who have spent the best part of their lives, and a large capital besides, in preparing for the work of the ministry? Neither the mother Church of Scotland, nor the Free Church, nor the Church in the United States, have such a severe law as this. They leave to Providence the determination of a man's fitness for the ministry, and find no trouble arising out of such a course. There are men now in the Church filling effectively important positions who have been longer far on the probationers' list than two or double two years. Not infrequently will it happen that a licentiate does not find his power or meet with the acceptance which his talents and his piety justify, till some years after his license. Why then should we place this discouragement and humiliation in the path of the ministry? More supply of an eligible kind is, it is said, wanted. Is it an inviting prospect for a student to contemplate that the long and severe course of his training may possibly be sacrificed and himself shelved by the misfortune of not obtaining a call within two years? or that he should be at the mercy of a Presbytery for continuing his ministry for a period of more than two years? Or is it dealing fairly with a minister who may be thrown out of a charge by circumstances over which he may have no control, that his prospects of obtaining another should in like manner be bounded by the short space of one year? Better far, abolish the plan for the "Distribution of Probationers" altogether than inflict such an injustice on honourable and innocent men. If any plan necessitates such a condition, better the plan should perish than the injury be done. The Free Church of Scotland has for some years been considering this question, and the plan they have adopted might be found to suit us also. They have a bureau to which probationers give their names, and to which Presbyteries and churches wanting supplies can apply. The plan is simple. It seems to work well. Why not try it and leave the vacant ministry at liberty, as long as Providence will permit, to find the vacant places that after much probation may be reserved for them, and in the meantime to preach Christ whenever and wherever an opportunity offers? No one will deny that those who are seeking to devise an acceptable plan for the distribution of probationers are animated by the highest and kindest motives. It may, however, in this, as in some more important things, be found that the *laissez faire*, or something akin to it, is after all the best.

CAN A MINISTER PLEASE EVERYBODY?

MR. EDITOR,—In an article lately published in THE PRESBYTERIAN you answer the above question by saying that a minister should not try to please everybody. You even go further and say he should try to please nobody. You quote Paul and Christ in support of your position, and make out a very good case, and you ought to be right; but who does not know that what should be and what really is are two widely different things.

Practically, a minister in the Canada Presbyterian Church is expected to please everybody. When a congregation becomes vacant the Church sends them candidates—seven years if necessary—till one is found that pleases the whole congregation, both members and adherents, and especially he must please the young. It is not enough that he should please a majority but the congregation must be like a jury—unanimous, or nearly so. If there should be any considerable minority opposed—say one-fourth—the call must be set aside, and a new man found who will please everybody. This is the condition on which a minister enters upon his charge, and it must be kept

up. Though in large and influential congregations in towns and cities, where there is a good session of elders to hold up the hands of the minister, his position may be sufficiently secure to enable him to rebuke offenders without any great danger to his position. It is widely different in small supplemented congregations. Let a minister attempt to rebuke a man who pays \$20 out of the \$400 which is raised towards his salary, for drunkenness or profanity, or any other practice in which he may see fit to indulge, and he had better have another home ready to shelter his family. The ministers in such congregations are completely at the mercy of one or two such men, and under the present system there is no help for it. The minister must trust to Providence and do his duty. In mission stations the state of things is much worse. I will give a true case by way of example. A charge was brought against the missionary precisely similar to the one brought against Rev. Mr. Beattie, of Brantford. The Presbytery, after a thorough investigation, found the charges to be completely groundless, and the result of malice. But the conduct of Pilate was repeated; after declaring officially that they could find no fault in him, they discharged him to please the few who were opposed to him. Two other missionaries were sent with the hope that they would please both parties, but this policy proved a failure. The best part of the congregation stuck to the first minister. It was only a few of the disaffected who would go to hear any other. The Presbytery was at last forced to re-appoint the first—simply because it was found that after all the slanderous attacks on his character he could please the greatest number. This attempt of the Presbytery to please all parties cost this poor missionary two years' salary, besides all the trouble of mind, and was near ruining the congregation. There was another case of a missionary who had laboured three years on a very difficult field. He attempted to admonish some members who had got drunk and engaged in a free fight. One of them who had paid ten dollars per year towards the stipend, could curse the minister to his face and put him to defiance, and exercise enough of influence with the session and Presbytery to get the engagement terminated two months before its time of expiry, and turn him with a sick wife and helpless family out on the world on a month's notice. The Presbytery gave the missionary a flattering testimonial as to the zeal and diligence with which he had discharged his duties, but they said he had proved unacceptable, viz. he had failed to please everybody, and though during the three years he had laboured on the field more money had been raised than had been promised, the Presbytery feared that if a few of the disaffected should refuse to pay their subscriptions it would be required to make up the deficiency for those two months. Rather than run that risk, the Presbytery terminated the engagement, cutting the minister out of \$120. Now, it may be a minister's duty to admonish and rebuke when duty demands, under all circumstances, but is the Church doing its duty when it places its ministers so completely at the mercy of those whom they attempt to discipline. What, you ask, is to be the remedy? It is simply a return to good old-fashioned conservative Presbyterianism, i.e., every Presbytery should be expected to see that every congregation within its bounds is under pastoral care, instead of allowing them as at present to be scattered as sheep having no shepherd, and that every minister is employed in pastoral work, instead of going or being sent throughout the length and breadth of the Church, like so many tramps seeking employment. It is because the Methodists recognize this principle in dealing with their churches and ministers, that they are so successful. If we would only recognize it and act on it the work of our Church would be carried on much more efficiently. A Methodist minister feels free to exercise discipline when necessary, and however many enemies he may make, his Conference sustains him. All friction is avoided by his removal at the end of the year. The Presbyterian minister has no such protection. For a faithful discharge of his duties his congregation may turn him out on the road, and there is no redress. I would not advocate any change at present which would interfere with settled charges, but it is really high time that the so-called Methodist system was applied to all the vacant congregations and vacant ministers. I know of no interest that would suffer by the change except the railroad companies and the Methodist Church. A Methodist minister told me lately that they profited largely by