

Communications.

BRICK WITHOUT STRAW—A WORD TO CONGREGATIONS IN ARREARS.

The complaint of being required to make bricks without straw is very old. It was first uttered by the Israelites when they were slaves in Egypt, when Moses, commissioned by God, had presented himself before Pharaoh and demanded their freedom. (Exodus v.: 16.) That incensed monarch having heard the request, only drew the reins tighter than ever, for that very day the command to his overseers was, "Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them, ye shall not diminish ought thereof, for they be idle." In these times bricks were made in Egypt, as they are still, of clay mixed with chopped straw. Straw, then, was absolutely necessary to these ancient brick-makers. And where were they to get it? See them up by daylight away in the grain fields, pulling stubble, for they have now to make as many bricks as before, but that number was large enough then for a hard day's work. The result is, that when the taskmasters inspect the work at eventide, it is found that many have come short. And because of this they are beaten. Had any of you witnessed such an act of cruelty, you would have been apt to have stepped forward, as Moses once did, and struck down that Egyptian who dared to lift the lash against the faithful but oppressed Israelite. You would have said, "Give these Israelites straw, and Pharaoh shall have his full tale of brick." In reading this narrative, common sense at once rises against the cruelty of Pharaoh's demand, for it was he, and not his slaves, that was at fault. But although every one would instantly condemn Pharaoh, there are many who act upon the same unreasonable and unrighteous principle, of expecting the impossible. And there are many Christian congregations in this Canada of ours to whom their pastors may bring home the old bitter cry, "There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say unto us make brick." In showing how this applies to Churches, observe

1. WHAT CONGREGATIONS EXPECT FROM THEIR MINISTERS.

Many congregations, we do not say all, are as imperious in their demands as Pharaoh was of his brick makers. They look for brick, and first-class brick too, while they withhold the straw.

1. *Every minister is expected by his congregation to preach good sermons.* No matter how he is paid, he must be up to the times in his preaching, and one failure counterbalances a hundred successes. And those who withhold the straw are generally the very ones to find fault. But no minister can be up to the times in his preaching, unless he is continually adding to his library, and no country minister can support a family, bear the other expenses of his position, and get many new books off \$400 a-year, or perhaps considerably less. "Oh!" says one, "a minister does not need new books; he has the Bible, and that is a cheap book." It is well that it is a cheap book, for had it been as dear as it was in the early days of Luther, few ministers in Canada could have purchased it. But a minister needs more books than a Bible. It is the ocean whence the pearls of salvation must be brought, but he will find these more readily with the assistance of all the first-class pearl divers, both of ancient and modern times. The