

to enter into or inherit the kingdom of God. The latter was proved to be a new heart in union with Christ, and Christ in the heart of the believer and as the hope of glory. Beautifully and powerfully did the preacher show how the Spirit of God moves and directs and controls the mental and moral machinery, and infuses a heavenly influence and inspiration into the new-born soul. Old things thus pass away, and all things become new. After dwelling with great power and persuasion, and telling effect, on both themes of the text, Mr. Parsons asked his audience four questions:—First. Have we this Spirit—have we experienced this birth of the Spirit? Second. Are we nourishing it? Third. Are we victorious through it? Fourth. Are we loyal in manifesting it?

These are a few thoughts that impressed my own mind, and I doubt not that many were both edified and impressed even more than myself by this admirable and able exposition. At first I had intended to take notes, but was so carried away by the voice, and delivery, and earnestness of the speaker, that my pencil found its way back into my pocket again almost imperceptibly. The prayer was a sermon in itself, and the reading of the Ten Commandments, the twenty-second Psalm, and our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, satisfied me that no ordinary man has succeeded the late venerable and beloved Dr. Topp. Dr. Cuyler was right when he drew attention lately to the importance of delivery with appropriate gesture. Hence the great Demosthenes laid such stress on delivery or pronunciation that he considered it the chief requisite for an orator. I was captivated by our brother Parsons, and at first thought I saw another Phillips Brookes in the pulpit, but was agreeably disappointed; for, though I sat in the gallery to hear the great Boston preacher, I lost one-half his discourse owing to his rapid utterance, and probably some defect in the acoustic properties of the building. But with the preacher yesterday I heard every word, and a more attentive audience I have never seen.

Toronto, 1st May, 1882.

SPECTATOR.

THE PROBATIONERS' SCHEME AND VACANT CONGREGATIONS.

The "distribution of probationers" seems to be one of the vexed questions of the Church, as no scheme has yet been devised that has met the difficulty or satisfied all parties. I do not profess to be able to solve the problem; but as the first step towards a solution is a correct statement of the facts of the case, it has occurred to me that to endeavour to do this might help to a better understanding of it, and perhaps the adoption of a more satisfactory arrangement.

The object of the Distribution Scheme is to bring the ministers without charge into contact with the charges without a pastor, with a view to settlement. That this is in itself a desirable object, goes without saying. But there is a misconception that seems to underlie nine-tenths of all that is said or written about the distribution of probationers. It is assumed, whether conscientiously or not, that the vacancies of the Church are for the ministers without charge, and especially those on the "list;" and that these are for the vacancies, and have the first, if not the only claim upon them. Now, every one knows that this is not in accordance with either the theory or the practice of our Church. The theory is, that any minister of the Church in good standing is eligible to be called to any vacancy in the Church; and this has also been practised, for translations and inductions as regularly occur as ordinations and inductions. It may be a misfortune that so many vacant congregations should prefer to call a minister from another congregation in which he is doing good work, when they might get one that would serve them as well not in any fixed charge, but it is a fact that many prefer to do it. Now, it follows from this that vacant congregations must be accessible to settled pastors as well as to unsettled ministers and probationers, and it is at this point encounters difficulty. The settled ministers select the places in which they want to be heard, or are selected by these places, and these, of course, are always the most desirable vacancies, or at least those most anxious for a settlement. The remaining vacancies are left for the other ministers, and these are used very much as a kind of *packing* to fill in the empty spaces, so that all the pulpits may have continuous supply. This is where the grievance comes in, and I think everyone must see that there is some ground

for it. It places those in the hands of the Distribution Committee at a disadvantage—it relegates them, as it were, to a lower rank. No doubt in this way constant employment is found for them, or nearly so; but it is employment of a kind that has a hurtful rather than a beneficial effect upon both themselves and the congregations they may serve. For a minister to go round on a weary pilgrimage from place to place, one or two Sabbaths in each, is one of the most unprofitable—we would even say demoralizing—processes he can well be subjected to—demoralizing both to himself and the congregations he visits. It destroys his habits of study, tends to lessen the interest he should feel in his work, and engenders a restless and unsettled disposition. Nor is there any good he can do to the congregations to which he is sent that at all counterbalance these evils. They as often as otherwise do not want him, or at best they regard him as simply sent to supply a gap, and thus the object of the Distribution Scheme—that for which alone its existence can be excused, viz., to facilitate the settlement of probationers and ministers without charge—is, by circumstances that the scheme cannot control, practically for the most part defeated. It is not to be wondered at, then, that many ministers without charge do not put themselves into the hands of the Distributing Committee. And they are justified in not doing so, just as any man is justified in not doing that which would lessen his usefulness and self-respect. And as long as settled ministers have a right to be heard in the vacancies of the Church without going on the probationers' list, who can deny the same right to unsettled ministers who prefer to make their own arrangements? These statements seem hard against the Distribution Scheme, but I do not wish to be understood as blaming in the slightest degree the committee in charge of that scheme, and who, no doubt, do the best they can for both the congregations and the ministers under their care. But the scheme itself is part of a whole into which it does not fit, and never can fit or work satisfactorily until the whole present arrangements for the settlement of vacant charges be considerably altered. What are the nature and direction of these alterations I will not at present venture to say, but may do so on some future occasion.

CONGRUITY.

SYNOD OF TORONTO AND KINGSTON.

The Synod of Toronto and Kingston met in St. Paul's Church, Peterborough, on the evening of Tuesday, the 2nd inst. The retiring Moderator, Rev. John Smith, of Erskine Church, Toronto, preached from Mark xiii. 34: "To every man his work." At the conclusion of the religious services, the Synod was constituted, and the Rev. John Gray, acting as Clerk, proceeded to the business of calling the roll, when eighty ministers and elders answered as follows:—Presbytery of Kingston, nine ministers and six elders; Peterborough, fourteen ministers and eight elders; Whitby, five ministers and one elder; Lindsay, six ministers and four elders; Toronto, eighteen ministers and two elders; Barrie, one elder; Owen Sound, unrepresented; Saugeen, one minister; Guelph, four ministers and one elder. These numbers were considerably increased by subsequent arrivals.

After the roll was corrected and agreed to, the Synod proceeded to the election of a Moderator, the choice falling upon the Rev. A. A. Drummond, of Newcastle, who assumed his seat, and a vote of thanks to the retiring Moderator having been passed, the sederunt was closed.

WEDNESDAY.

Synod opened at ten o'clock a.m. The first hour was occupied with public prayer and praise. The minutes of the evening sederunt were read and confirmed. The Committee on Bills and Overtures presented their first report, suggesting orders of business for the morning, afternoon, and evening sederunts. On motion, the name of Samuel J. Porter was agreed to be placed on the roll of the Presbytery of Barrie. Geo. McArthur, B. A., of Queen's College, Kingston, having passed satisfactory examinations, applied to be taken on trial for license. Application granted. David Beckett, S. Carruthers, John Gibson, B.A., Jno. Jamieson, D. B. Macdonald and David McLaren submitted certificates of having finished the curriculum, etc., and applied to be taken on trial for licenses. Their applications were granted, as was also that of John McNeil, B.A., who has been extending his studies at Edinburgh University.

A motion asking the Synod to overlook the irregularity implied in the Presbytery of Toronto holding a meeting without the bounds of the Presbytery (in Peterborough on Tuesday afternoon), gave rise to a great deal of discussion, and two or three amendments, but the latter were withdrawn and the original motion agreed to in an amended form.

The Synod then took up the appeal of J. Oliver, of Toronto, against a decision of the Presbytery of Toronto, in reference to the trouble in Cooke's Church. The rest of the morning and the most of the afternoon were occupied with this case, with the result that the appeal was dismissed.

Overtures from the Rev. Andrew Wilson upon the introduction of the subject of Church government to the colleges of the Church; from the Presbytery of Barrie, as to the opening and closing of colleges, were ordered to be transmitted to the General Assembly. The same was done with an application from the Barrie Presbytery to have the name of Rev. John Gray, of Orillia, put on the list of retired ministers.

Principal Caven and Hon. Alex. Morris called attention to the heavy costs connected with the defence of the Temporalities Fund Board, putting the same at about \$10,000 as falling upon the members of that Board individually. The Synod agreed to ask the General Assembly to commend this matter to the practical sympathies of the Church, and appointed Dr. Caven and Mr. Morris to represent them in this matter.

Guelph was chosen as the place of meeting of the Synod for next year.

In the evening a very full and interesting report on the State of Religion was read by the Rev. Walter M. Roger, of Ashburn. It gave much information as to the state of family religion, church life-work, the ingathering of the young and careless, hindrances to these, and the best means of overcoming them. It reported growing liberality to the schemes of the Church. Growing confidence in evangelistic methods through these happy results had been reached during the past year. The report was received, and its recommendations considered in succession, and adopted as follows: 1. That a committee be appointed in each Presbytery to make arrangements for and take the oversight of special services in co-operation with pastors and sessions. Its adoption was moved by Rev. Mr. Rodgers, of Collingwood, in an earnest speech. On motion of Principal Caven, the motion was amended to read—"That the several Presbyteries be recommended to appoint committees, whose duty it shall be to render assistance to pastors and sessions in conducting evangelistic services, whenever in the judgment of sessions it shall be deemed desirable to hold such services, and that such committees may institute services in such neglected districts as the Presbytery may direct. 2. That the Synod's Committee on the State of Religion be instructed to co-operate with the Presbytery committees and with the ministers within the bounds in special services. 3. That the Synod learned with satisfaction that an increased number of conferences upon religious life work have been held during the year by the Presbyteries, and the Kirk Sessions recommend that these conferences be continued from time to time, as found convenient. 4. That the second Sabbath of October be agreed on as a day of united special prayer and preaching on the subject of revival, in the hope that the Great Head of the Church may bless this measure to the stimulating of the Church's hope and the increase of her power and prosperity in the land. A conference followed, in which stirring addresses were made by Mr. Henderson, of Cobourg; Rev. Messrs. McLeod, of Toronto; Smith, of Grafton; Rodgers, of Collingwood, and Roger, of Ashburn. The mind of the Synod seemed to be strongly directed towards the early ingathering of the young and checking of the disposition referred to by the report in some quarters to attempt competition with the world in catering for the amusement of the public, instead of depending on the power of the truth and the attraction of Christian graces to win the hearts and satisfy the souls of the young and the old. The conference closed after the adoption of the report and the re-appointment of the committee as follows:—Rev. Messrs. Roger, Fraser, Currie, Panton, Smith, Torrance, Mitchell, Hastie. Elders—Messrs. Henderson, Alexander, Yellowlees and Johnston.

THURSDAY.

The Synod met at ten a.m. After devotional exercises, the Report on Temperance was read by Rev.