

Our Contributors.

TO THE MINISTER WHO FEELS LONELY.

BY KNOXIAN.

MY DEAR BROTHER, — I understood you to say in your last letter that you feel a little lonely at times and that the feeling seems to be growing on you. The November days were short and some of them were dull, you have no congenial society, your work is a little monotonous, you have little to interest you and nothing to stir the blood. You are in a bad way, according to your own account, but are you quite sure that the trouble arises wholly from your environment. Are you reasonably certain that the cause may not be partly internal rather than wholly external. Is there not a remote possibility that a change in *you* might seem to make a change in your surroundings.

You say you yearn for congenial society. Are you quite sure that you are not hankering after somebody with whom you might gossip about the Presbytery and its last meeting; about committees and who are on them; about the vacant chairs in Knox and who are likely to be asked to take them; about vacancies and who may be called to fill them? Do you hope to refine and strengthen your intellect with talk about overtures and resolutions and amendments and reports? Are you sorry because you have no opportunity to discuss the comparative importance of Home and Foreign Mission work—nobody to argue with as to whether the soul of an Indian under the care of the Foreign Mission Committee in the Northwest, may not be of less value than the soul of a white man under the supervision of the Home Mission Committee in the same region? How your heart would warm, and your mind broaden, and your intellect sharpen, and your literary style improve if you just had somebody to speak with on these mighty themes! The society of the great masters in literature and theology is of no value, compared with the society of a modern specialist who can discriminate nicely between the soul of a little Indian boy on the Reserve and the soul of a little white boy who lives across the imaginary line that divides the Reserve from the Prairie farms. If you had somebody to converse with who can explain without any effort the comparative value of the souls of white men on the Rocky Mountains and the souls of Chinamen down in Victoria you no doubt would improve mightily as a minister of the gospel.

But, brother, we cannot all move in the highest circles of the Church. We cannot all enjoy the society of people who are on familiar terms with the headquarters of the sacramental host, and therefore know just what ought to be done and how and when it ought to be undertaken. Those of us who are not privileged in this way must make what use we can of the society within our reach.

Brother Lonely, have you a library? You have of course. Is there anything on these shelves written by a man named William Shakespeare? You have heard of Shakespeare. He lived in England some years ago, though his forefathers no doubt were Scotchmen. Yes, there it is on the top shelf covered with dust. Just as I feared, brother. A minister who keeps his Shakespeare on the top shelf loaded with dust, is very likely to be lonesome and perhaps deserves to be. If you want to have a real good time and be quite independent of everybody just cultivate an acquaintance with William Shakespeare. Some of his pieces, we must not say plays, are very exciting, Othello for instance. The Hyams' trial does not compare with some of the sensations that Shakespeare worked up. The speeches are good. The addresses by leading counsel in the Hyams matter were a trifle longer than any Shakespeare makes his people deliver but Mark Antony put more polish on his. Polonius was probably

as wise a man as any politician stumping North Ontario at the present time. Brutus would compare favourably with anybody in Cardwell. The fact is Shakespeare produced as good men in his mind as we can grow in actual life.

Brother, if you want to read Shakespeare properly get a copy that has the plays bound separately in limp covers, slip a play into your grip or into your inside coat pocket when you are going from home and then if you are lonely the fault is not with Shakespeare. Of course you must not take out your copy in the Presbytery when the members are wrestling with the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee.

You never could enjoy Shakespeare! So much the worse for you. Supposing you try Milton, or Dickens, or Thackeray, or George Eliot, or Robert Louis Stevenson?

Never did care for these people. You want something theological and can't find anything new. Indeed. Have you read Fairbairn's great book. Never read a line of him! Just as I feared. A man who does not read the master's hardly ever does read anything new.

You want some current literature and cannot afford to get it. Now brother. Quite a number of the best magazines can be purchased at any book store for ten cents each. The best of them can be had for very little more. Most ministers are rather a failure in the bank account line but candidly there are not many who cannot raise ten cents to buy a magazine with.

Any minister who says he is lonesome with the works of Barrie, Crockett, and Ian Maclaren within his reach ought to be tried for *inertia* and found guilty.

When a pastor sees his parishioners, male and female, old and young, walking about with the works of Crockett and Ian Maclaren in their pockets it is high time he had stopped talking about lonesomeness and taken to reading.

There are precious few Presbyterian ministers in Canada who can say without a loss of influence that they do not know anything about Burnbrae, or Drumsheugh, or Dr. McLure, or Margaret Howe.

A GERMAN MISSIONSFEST.

BY R. G. M.

In the Province of Hanover the National Church, the Lutheran, is divided into four districts each under the a General Superintendent; each district is subdivided into smaller districts, the head of each of which is the Superintendent. The parishes in each Superintendency are banded together in inspections, i.e., every four or five parishes are united together for certain purposes; one of which is the annual missionsfest or festival. Each Inspection has every summer a united Fest when the claims of missions, Home and Foreign, are laid before the people, sometimes by local ministers, but generally assisted by speakers from outside.

One beautiful Sabbath afternoon we heard that a Missionsfest was to be held at Grone, a village a couple of miles out of Göttingen. We wended our way out there, and found the Fest being held in a beautiful orchard, across the gate of which was a fine arch of evergreens, bearing the motto: "Herzlich Willkommen." We had already passed under a similar arch in the village. Up to one of the trees was built a pulpit (not a platform), covered all over with green branches, and decorated in front with a large cross of flowers. From here, when we arrived—and, in fact, we could hear him long before we arrived, for he was a Boanerges—a minister was preaching on Foreign missions to a very large and attentive congregation gathered from all the parishes in the Inspection, and many from the city. The benches were all occupied and many standing. To judge from the numbers the Fest is in favor with the people, and from the attention paid to the long sermons Germans seem to have an interest in missions. The

sermon on Outer [Foreign] missions, at least as much as we heard and understood of it, was an earnest and eloquent appeal, and thoroughly evangelical in its tone.

At the close of the sermon a hymn was sung, led by the local band and joined heartily in by the people, hymn sheets having been distributed. The singing was quite impressive. Like all German hymn-music, the melody was no "rattety-bang jingle," but staid and decent, a good deal like our own old psalm tunes. A minister on my remarking to him the character of the music, told me the German people couldn't stand praising the Lord to light fantastic tunes. We wish our own Church had some higher idea of music befitting a church, but if we get the new united Hymn Book, we may reach it in time. After the hymn, there was an intermission of half an hour, which was taken advantage of by most to go over to the village beer-garden for refreshments. In company with parish minister and the inspector of the Theological Student's Stift, in Göttingen, we did the same, but unfortunately (or otherwise) we were late in going, and the beer was all done. The day being hot, and a greater crowd present than was expected, the supply was not equal to the demand, and we had to put up with a seltzer. Beer is the national beverage, and is universally drunk, but it is not very strong. I am told the minister lamented on behalf of temperance, that not more beer was drunk, instead of whiskey, etc.

The exercises commenced with the singing of another hymn; the pulpit was occupied by another speaker, a minister from Hanover, who was well qualified to speak on Inner [Home] missions as he had been for a number of years in slum work, and is yet head of a hospital for lame, blind, etc., although he is also minister of a parish. He began by reading for his text the evangel for the day (Second after Trinity) Luke xv., during the reading of which the people all reverently stood, the men taking off their hats. The preacher was an eloquent speaker, very dramatic in style, drawing harrowing pictures of the miseries of the deformed, and maimed. We fear his worst cases appeared somewhat incredible to some of the Old Country folks. The inspector was interested in listening to the comments of three old women seated in front of him, some of which showed plainly they thought the preacher was drawing the long bow. The effect of the peroration was somewhat spoiled by the sky presaging a thunder storm which caused the people to leave. The sermon ended, another hymn was sung, the blessing was pronounced, accompanied by the sign of the cross, and the Fest was over. A collection was taken up at the gate for missions, and seemed to be well responded to.

Besides this United Fest every parish has one of its own on the first Sabbath of the year, when the Holy Gospel, from which a sermon must be preached, is "The Adoration of the Magi." The custom is to make this story of the coming of the first of heathen to the Lord the ground of a sermon on Foreign missions, so that twice a year, at least, the claims of missions are laid before the whole Church.

The Missionsfest, in the open air, under the trees, is an established institution in Germany, and appears to be a successful mode of bringing the people together, and getting them interested in missions, and is a change from the regular service. As we looked over the large congregation gathered in the grove, we wondered if the same mode might not be successful in America, with, of course, the necessary modifications. This might not, and perhaps would not, be possible in city congregations, but in country parishes it would be an excellent way of bringing the people together for a pleasant afternoon, and at the same time doing something to forward the cause which lies so close to the heart of the whole Canadian Church, the cause of missions, Home and Foreign. At least one Canadian parish has adopted the Mission Feast, and found it successful. The con-

gregations under the Rev. Mr. Sawers, in the London Presbytery, one of the most missionary parishes in the Church, have every year a large Missionsfest, and have had for a number of years.

Göttingen, Germany.

SOCIAL WORK FOR STRANGERS.

BY ESTELLA WILLIAMS.

This is a very important field of work in our Lord's vineyard. Right in this line, work can be done for the Master which will tell through eternal ages. A rich store of opportunity lies before us here. How shall we use it? Strangers come in and go out amongst us every day. Shall we, God's servants, let them pass us by unnoticed, while Satan's emissaries are ever alert and busy? Golden opportunities are ours for doing God's own work among these new comers but, if we neglect these opportunities, and if through this neglect a bright young life is blighted, a precious soul is lost, on whom rests the responsibility? Does it not rest upon the shoulders of those professing disciples of Christ, who, with never a smile of welcome, never a thought of opening up their own exclusive circle for a stranger keep all the warmth and brightness of home and church to themselves, while the young stranger, left in the chilly outer circle, after a few wistful lingering glances, turns to the ever open doors of the saloon and billiard rooms. Oh, how blindly we go on in our lives day after day, content with our own position in society, our own circle of acquaintances, never seeming to notice the fresh faces that appear in our midst three or four times, perhaps, and then for want of a friendly smile, a welcoming word, are seen no more. We do not follow them up to discover where they find their society now, they have occasioned but a passing thought in our minds, no more, yet who shall say but that at the great judgment bar of God, we will not have to give an account for the soul of that young man or young woman we might so easily have reached and helped.

Can we plead ignorance of our responsibility in this matter? We have no right to be ignorant. When God gives us light and we deliberately close our eyes, is our blindness then any excuse? God repeatedly mentions the stranger in His Holy Word. He never forgot the "stranger within the gates" though we so often do. His command rings plainly out from the grand old Gospel: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." How is it we heed it so little? In Numbers ix: 14 we find that special provision was made for the stranger at the Passover Feast: "And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the Lord; according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do; ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and for him that was born in the land," and in Psalm cxlvi: 9 we read these gracious words. "The Lord preserveth the strangers, He relieveth the fatherless and the widow."

Jesus Christ was Himself a stranger upon the earth. He knows all about that intense craving for love and human sympathy which even the strongest of us feel at times, when far away from home, with no friendly hand to clasp our own and share our burdens with us. He knows just how desolate it is to be alone in the world, and how prone we are to wander into slippery places at such times. Hence he makes our receiving of strangers one of the conditions of our entering into the kingdom. Hear His own words, "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me," for "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."—Matt. xxv. 34-40.