

find it, than all was hurry and confusion. The frantic behaviour of officials and travellers seemed to indicate that, through the above mentioned laziness of our locomotive, twenty seconds were all that remained of the twenty minutes stoppage advertised in our time tables. No restaurant could be seen, the porters we hailed did not understand one word either of French or English. At the next station of importance a coffee stall was at last discovered. There was just time to pay for and seize some of the curious looking concoction, every drop of which we spilt on the ground in our agitation, as the whistle sounded for the departure of the train. "Oh," sighed the invalid of the party, "Why did we pack up our Italian phrase book?" "Of what use would it have been?" asked another of our party. "We might have read a page to each guard, perhaps something might have hit," was the suggestion of a third.

To the long night the day again succeeded, and revealed to each of us her own and her neighbour's begrimed condition. The pangs of hunger, intensified by the sight of the empty lunch baskets, compelled us to close with an offer at the first station of bad eatables for a ransom. We lost our money and our appetites by the transaction, but happily there was no time to grieve, for we were nearing the Campagna, that desolate, fever-stricken region, which in olden times was a populous suburb of Rome. For miles and miles we traversed a dreary plain, as truly deserted and dead as any uninhabited wilderness. And yet we hardly heeded this lonely approach to the great city, in our eagerness to catch the first sight of the Alban Hills, or the dome of the temple of the world. But Giuseppe, the engine driver, in whom familiarity with Rome had bred contempt, saw a little Giuseppe and his dinner awaiting his arrival in the city of the Cæsars, steamed up his iron steed to something like express speed, and we rushed round the city walls amidst confused cries of "There is St. Peter's, no there is a larger dome," "Look at that old gateway, will that be the one by which Paul entered Rome?" "And oh! see those wonderful broken arches—there must be the Claudian Aqueduct only 1,800 years old!" Nothing more could be seen, for we were slowing into a very modern station; a few minutes more, and we were seated comfortably in a modern hotel omnibus, and before we had attempted to realize the great historical fact of our entrance into Rome, we were standing in a modern hotel, where a modern white-tied waiter was asking in good English if we should prefer beef-steak for luncheon. Now that was a most appropriate question on the part of this Italian functionary, but probably we had expected to lunch off the leg of a descendant of Romulus' wolf, for the commonplace in the man's offer jarred upon us at the moment.

And now we found ourselves as we had anticipated, agitated by the profoundest sentiments in this most important crisis in our lives. Were they of exultation that our dream was at length realized, and that we stood within sight of the Capitol and St. Peter's, our feet actually on the soil of free Italy, that Italy for whose freedom Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi and other brave sons of liberty fought and suffered? Alas! No. We were deeply moved, it is true, but it was by the fact, of which our olfactory nerves had just made us aware, of our immediate proximity to the hotel kitchen, whence these beef-steaks would presently issue.

That evening, when refreshed and rested, we remembered our promise to announce the fact of our safe arrival to interested friends at home. "We shall await with impatience your first impressions of Rome" they said to us. "First impressions!" Strange to say, the recollection of this duty was not altogether satisfactory, nor did we set about the performance of the simple task with the alacrity we had anticipated. But to the honour of modern historians, be it said that our first post card to England was at least the bare record of unvarnished truth.

It was as follows: "We arrived in comfort and safety this morning about noon. We find Rome a large city. The narrow streets are lined on either side with tall buildings, many of which are hotels, others are *pensions*, a few are private houses, the remainder are, not prisons as we supposed, but palaces. Soon after our arrival, we were privileged to witness a sight of unparalleled interest, with which in this case happily antiquity had nothing to do. It was a master piece of Italian high art, marvellous alike in the genius of its conception, the taste of its execution, and

the richness of its details. The effect produced in the minds of the most unappreciative beholders was one of profound emotion. Share with us our first enthusiasm in the city of the Cæsars. The object around which such interest centred was a *chef-d'œuvre* of Italian culinary art in the shape of a dish of Roman beef-steak."

SETTLEMENT OF VACANCIES.

MR. EDITOR.—Kindly allow me a little space in your valuable columns that I may examine "One of the East's" article in your issue of the 22nd ult. In his criticism of my remarks, previously published, he unconsciously sustains me in my contention. This is far from his evident intention. One of the instances quoted clearly shows the spirit in which the proposed scheme would be hailed in many quarters of the Church during the course of its practical application. It also points out where it would fail, i.e., whence stipend? Evidently "One of the East" is dissatisfied with our present system of settling vacancies; and hails with satisfaction the proposed reformation? Yet he is evidently a member of a Presbytery which has already been repulsed in its endeavour to put this very measure (in embryo) into practical operation—repulsed by the unexpected and astounding query, "Whence stipend?" That's rich!

During the course of my ministry I have had occasion to visit more than once such a congregation as is described by "One of the East" in instance No. 1 of his article. Indeed, from facts given, I am very much mistaken if it be not one and the same.

Presuming that I am not mistaken, I proceed. Now I attribute it to latent wisdom in "One of the East" that he claims no wisdom. On that score I am ready to forgive him. I attribute it also to the fact that his wisdom is but latent that he should have instanced such a case as "illustrating the successful (?) working of the present system." For I affirm that this case is not a fair instance. I question if three other such cases could be found throughout the whole Church. It is, therefore, an exception, and should never be taken to illustrate the rule.

This congregation is in very peculiar circumstances. The land on which they are settled is of the poorest kind. It is not really fit to live on. The large majority of them subsist, not on the produce of their own farms, but on money earned by their young men and women in the neighbouring Republic or elsewhere. The people are hardy and persevering. They remain there mostly because their limited capital is sunk in their all but worthless farms. They are naturally liberal with what they have, and kind-hearted. Their late minister seeing all this did not urge them to pay his stipend with any degree of regularity, and the consequence was that at the end of his pastorate among them they were indebted to him to the extent of not less than \$400. A number of those who helped to make up the original subscription have passed away—some to other countries, others to realms whence they shall not return.

The poor congregation has, since the demise of their pastor, been struggling to wipe out that debt. And that is the sole reason why they were not settled within a reasonable period after becoming vacant four years ago. That is the "purpose" to which they put the little they save, and which they would not willingly devote to a probationer's expense. Since the demise of their late pastor they sustained the means of grace among themselves from April to October or so, and three Sabbaths at New Year—each year till the present year. They have also been contributing to the Schemes of the Church more or less liberally. Their debt also is now, I presume, pretty nearly wiped out. Again, I do not suppose it is any fault of theirs that they are not settled. Instead of one they have extended practically two calls of late. The first call kept them waiting a considerable time in suspense. It was declined of course. As soon as they got on their feet again they extended another call which kept them in suspense for something over seven months! During this time what could they do? This accounts for the fact that they were not regularly supplied this summer as usual. Is it really their fault they are vacant this twelve-month back?

Further, since they manifested their willingness to proceed to call, how many probationers did they hear? Did they hear four? Did they hear three? "No," "One of the East" replies, "they would not

receive any." And yet "One of the East" will hold up this congregation as an instance illustrative of the failure of the present system. A place where, he must admit, our present system had had no fair trial. He cannot point to three rejected candidates if I am rightly informed. Possibly the scarcity of Gaelic-speaking probationers (as I know the congregation needs such) may be mentioned as an extenuating act for both Presbytery and congregation. Twenty years without a pastor! Does that mean twenty years without Gospel ordinances. Certainly not. As already stated, they are generally supplied regularly for seven or eight months in the year and occasionally during the remaining five or four months. Their Church is not closed a Sabbath in the year I am told. They meet every Sabbath, and one of the elders takes charge and expounds the Word to the edification of the hearers. I say edification advisedly for some of these elders can handle divine truth with such ability as would put many a distinguished (?) grad to shame. Should such a congregation be instanced as illustrative of failure (?) of the present system of settling vacancies? Should such a congregation be recently stigmatized as hard and stiff-necked as has been done by "One of the East"? Is it not utterly unfair to bring this instance forward as showing what is a common occurrence throughout our Church?

I shall not trespass on your space by examining instance No. 2. I might locate it also and possibly exonerate it from blame. Nor shall I take up time or space proposing measures to deal with such cases. For I deem our present system as efficient, if not more so, than any other system extant or extinct.

I am asked to solve a problem for "One of the East," viz., "when a congregation fails to exercise the right to perform duty, should not the Presbytery act in the interests of that congregation?" Most certainly. Give them every facility to perform duty. Strive to produce conviction *re* duty. "But that is not exactly what I mean. Should not the Presbytery call a minister for the congregation?" I see that's it. Well, suppose a case. You hear one of your parishioners cursing and swearing. You rebuke him, and tell him it is his "duty" to control his tongue—keep it pure. He still swears. A faithful pastor, you do not give him up; you still urge him as to his "duty." But still no reformation. Let me tell what to do. Just act "in his interests," and you cease swearing for him; relieve him of his "duty" and yourself of the trouble of enforcing "duty" on his mind. "One of the East" has wisely admitted that it is the "right" and "duty" of a congregation to call a pastor. That being the case, should a Presbytery, having called and settled a minister over a congregation, relieve said congregation from its duty and exonerate it from the guilt incurred in not performing that duty?

Would not such conduct on the part of a Presbytery seal the congregation in its guilt and bar it from ever fulfilling that particular duty? MONTREALER.

REPORT ON BOOK OF FORMS.

MR. EDITOR,—May I ask the favour of being permitted through the columns of your paper to inform all who are interested in the subject, that a copy of the Report of Changes made in the Book of Forms which was laid on the table of last General Assembly has been prepared and printed; and that a copy has been mailed to every minister on the roll of the several Synods. If any have been overlooked, or any minister whose name is not on the rolls, or any elder desires to have a copy, I will send it on receiving his request.

The matter has to go again before the Presbyteries of the Church, and it is desirable that it be considered by them at as early a date as possible; so that there may be time before April next for the Committee to meet and prepare the report for next Assembly.

The importance of the revision is not to be ignored. At the same time as it is a revision only, and not the preparation of a new book, that has been so long in hand, as no change of great importance has been introduced in the revision, and as where any considerable change has been made, the approval of a General Assembly had first been obtained, it may appear to some that the Church should next year be prepared to issue the new revised edition of the Book of Forms. JOHN LAING, *Convener of Committee.*
The *Manse*, Dundas, September 26, 1888.