

morning in September, 1689. Here after dislodging the enemy from his fortifications, and placing the white banner of the Waldenses on their revered temple, these heroes entered to return their thanks. Finding the old church too small to hold the worshippers, they adjourned to one of the slopes of the mountain which bore the name above, and there, from a door placed on two rocks as a pulpit, a rousing sermon was preached, and still more rousing hymns sung, such as that beginning:—

"Gloire au Dieu d'Israel, gloire au Dieu de nos peres !
L'Arche de l'alliance est entrée aux saints lieux !
Après un long exil, ces vastes sanctuaires,
Ces bois, ces montagnes si chères,
Ont revus leurs enfants qui furent nos aïeux !" etc.

At the close of the service the band united in a covenant of mutual fidelity with uplifted hands, of which the opening paragraph gives an idea: "God by His Divine grace having happily led us back into the heritage of our forefathers, there to re-establish the pure service of our holy religion, by the completion of the enterprise which the great God of armies has hitherto conducted in our favour; we the pastors, captains and other officers, swear before God, and at the peril of our souls, to observe union and order amongst us, never willingly to separate nor disunite while God shall grant life to us; nor even though we should be so miserable as to be reduced to three or four; never to parley or treat with our enemies of France or Piedmont, without the participation of our whole country of war," etc. Well might their poet say

Vaudols, par ces serments le ciel bénit nos pères !
Et dans ces lieux sucrés est prêt à nous béatir ;
Ecrivons-nous aussi, joignant nos mains de frères.
Aux autels de mon Dieu je veux vivre et mourir !"

It is at Bobbio that the ascent of the

COL DE LA CROIX

begins by which you pass into France. The path is by the side of the Pellice which is now but a slender stream. Four hours' climbing bring you to the Bergeris de Pra, a small inn in a hollow, where grow potatoes and grass; and in two hours more you are on the summit of the Col (7,611 feet) from which you have a grand view of the pyramid of Monte Viso, "piercing the dark air as with a wedge." This defile has traditional honour of being that which Hannibal crossed the Alps into Italy, and Julius Cæsar into Gaul. On the way you pass Fort Mirabouc, now dismantled, near the ruins of which once took place a terrible conflict between the Vaudols and their oppressors.

It was by this pass, also that good Felix Neff crossed in 1823 and in 1829 from Val Queyres and Val Fressiniere, his French parishes, to arouse the Waldenses from the spiritual lethargy into which both pastors and people had fallen, though they continued to hold the form of sound words. At his preaching, happily, fresh leaves began to clothe the old stock.

We are now near the source of the Pellice where it steals down from the ice in a silver thread.

"A few steps may bring us to the spot
Where, happily, crown'd with flowers and green herds
The mountain-infant to the sun comes forth,
Like human life from darkness."

The sights of this day offered by nature, make impressions which scarcely ever seem to grow dim. They live on in the mind, "A vision of unfading glory." T. H.

Paris, Dec., 1883.

VACANT CHARGES.

MR. EDITOR,—A good deal has been said about the length of time that so many of our congregations are vacant. Some suppose that this indicates a lack of ministers to supply the demand. But the fact is that it will be found that these vacancies have been supplied with half a dozen or more of available ministers, and yet they are as far at the last as at the first, in most cases, of being ready to call. Inquiry as to the cause of this condition of things will, in four out of every five cases, reveal the sorrowful fact that the people and office-bearers are split up into factions at enmity one with another, and so bitter are their animosities that they will not act together either for the calling of a minister or for any purpose whatever. Their previous minister has, it may be, left them in a state of confusion and alienation of feeling that is a scandal alike to the ministry and to the Church. The result is that many of the ordinary congregation do not attend church regularly, if at all; that the congregation is reduced sometimes to little more than one half of its reported membership, and that those who do attend are not in a fit state of spirit to give a

fair hearing to the minister sent to supply the pulpit, but allow him to come and go as a profitless shadow.

Great wrong is thus done to probationers. Their labour is vain, their spirits hurt by positive neglect on the part of elders and people. They feel as if they were beating the air—that there is little or no receptivity on the part of the people for the truth which they preach, and little or no regard paid to their being sent as candidates for the vacant charge. Suppose one zealous elder or manager thinks that a minister whom the congregation has heard two or three times would be suitable for the charge and with one or two who agree with him goes round with a list, as the manner is in the country, to ascertain what each will subscribe for the stipend, he finds his own party willing to do their part, but the other party either oppose, or will do nothing and the project falls to the ground. The result is that a spirit of despondency falls upon the church, its young people scatter into other churches or neglect ordinances altogether, and a dead indifference takes possession of those who still cling to the congregation. In such circumstances there will be a protracted vacancy. If at last the faithful few by a great effort succeed in calling a minister, he, poor man, finds to his sorrow that he has not come to a bed of roses unless it be that the flowers and fragrance are gone and the sharp thorns alone remain.

Presbyteries are largely to blame for this state of things. They often know that ministers by indiscretions, bad temper, and unfaithfulness to duty, are the main cause of strife in congregations and yet they allow the evil work to go on till a resignation is necessary and then they ignore the distracted state of the congregation and send the faithless minister away with a flaming presbyterial certificate of faithfulness, zeal, eminence as a scholar and preacher, that simple folks wonder why both people and Presbytery were willing to part with so distinguished a brother.

All this, bad as it is, might be overlooked did the Presbytery even then take cognizance of the divided and distracted state of the vacant charge; but no, it is left to ferment into chronic acidity, to the permanent injury of religion and of the Presbyterian Church. The Presbytery would only be doing its duty did it appoint a solemn fast in such congregations and call its members to humiliation and repentance; and by the faithful preaching of the Word exorcise the spirit of evil that had found a home amongst them. There might then be some hope that probationers sent to them would be received and treated as servants of Christ and that, in due time, some one would be called to assume the permanent office of minister.

It may be true that we have not a sufficient number of ministers at present to supply our mission stations and vacant charges; still, it is also true, that our vacant charges have had abundance of able preachers sent them, and yet they are vacant, and, like the horse leech, their cry is for more. The Presbyteries in such cases should call for and demand a reason for this apathy; and, if found necessary, use their disciplinary powers of admonition and rebuke. If this were done long vacancies would be the exception and not, as at present, the rule. There is no need of new regulations, Presbyteries have ample powers in the premises if they would only use them. OBSERVER.

January 30th, 1884.

LAWYERS IN CHURCH COURTS.

MR. EDITOR,—I was pleased to read your editorial on the admission of law agents to Church courts. I think all will endorse your judgment that such a practice is not safe. I can easily conceive how a legal practitioner could bamboozle a session of unsophisticated but pious men. Though there is no express statement in our present Rules forbidding the admission of such, I think with you it is implied in the definition of the *Spiritual* Court and Order of Procedure. In the rules of the late C. P. Church is the following: "No law agents or advisers are allowed either in sessions or other courts of the Church; but, as many parties may be ignorant of the forms of judicial procedure, it is incumbent on sessions and Presbyteries to explain these fully and distinctly to them," etc. In Moncrieff's Church Practice, the following occurs: "No law agent or legal adviser is allowed admission as such to a meeting of session, in particular cases a person might, e.g., be permitted to sit beside an accused party as a friend, but not to take any open part in the procedure, unless authorized by the session to

act for the accused on very special grounds." I presume what applies to the Primary Court should certainly apply to the Superior. I hope the next edition of our Book of Rules and Procedure may be more explicit on this and other questions.

Feb. 1st, 1884.

JUSTITIA.

EXPENSES OF DELEGATES TO CHURCH COURTS.

MR. EDITOR,—Will you favour congregations with information on their duty as to paying the expenses of their minister as well as representative elder to Presbytery and Synod? I am not aware that they ever dispute their obligation to defray the expenses of their elder, but some have the impression that they have nothing to do with those of their minister. Why the invidious distinction it may be difficult to explain, but so it is. I have been accustomed to hold and teach that all such necessary expenditure should be paid out of the ordinary revenue of the congregation. Those who reside at the seat of Presbytery incur no travelling expenses in attending the court, but it is very different with those who are in rural districts far away, with often a scanty support. If they must draw upon it in order to represent their congregation in the Church court, is it any wonder that the attendance in our Presbyteries is often small, and a few about the city or centre have to do the business in which all should take a part? Will you state for information what is the law, written or unwritten? What is right? EQUITY.

Feb. 4th, 1884.

MR. SPURGEON, though not a Presbyterian, has a keen appreciation of its various excellencies. Speaking of the "Westminster Confession" he says that as an exhibition of scriptural truth it "has never been excelled." He adds:—With its seriousness and purity the doctrine of our forefathers still leavens religious society, and we are greatly mistaken if there be not ere long a sickening of men's minds of the modern sillabubs, and a return to the substantial meat of the good old times. Thank God for Scotland; the plague of doubt is not yet so current among her churches as it is south of the Tweed. The land of Knox yet holds to the old faith. God grant that caterpillars which are beginning to eat Scotland's kail may not be multiplied till they eat up every green thing.

NIHILISM having been comparatively quiet for a time, is now in a state of great activity. The real proportions and force of this mysterious and deadly organization cannot well be ascertained. Official supervision of telegrams prevents the real state of affairs being known outside bureaucratic circles, and the Nihilists themselves, with their sympathizers, naturally wish to deepen the impression the mysterious and terrible modes they employ are sure to produce in the popular mind. This modern political terrorism has succeeded in keeping the imperial family and the ruling class in a state of constant danger and alarm. The latest Nihilistic sensation is the reported attempt to poison the members of the imperial household by mixing the bread with strychnine. This attempt, if really made, is execrable. No cause advanced by such means can ever prosper. Liberty established by assassination and treachery can neither be healthy nor genuine.

THE charitable and corrective institutions of New York State are managed by a board appointed by the Government. Their last report contains many interesting statistics from which the following are taken. At the end of last September, according to the appraisal of the managers of the various institutions, the total value of property held for charitable purposes in the State of New York, was \$43,303,478.85, of which about thirty-five and three-quarters millions was real and seven and a half millions personal estate. Their receipts for the year which ended at that date were \$10,772,262.39, and their expenditures \$9,983,037.50. Of the receipts, \$710,753.98 came from the State, \$4,553,729.13 from counties, cities, and towns, and \$1,664,997.58 from private donations. The total number of orphan asylums and homes for the friendless in the State is 184, and the whole number of their inmates during the year was 42,643, as against 46,985 last year. On the first of October, 1883, the number under care was 26,338, or about fifteen hundred more than at the corresponding date of 1882. They comprised 1,715 aged men, 4,098 aged women, 10,955 boys, and 9,570 girls.