

honest face. May its centennial come in due time, and find its "eye undimmed and its strength unabated."

OUR LITTLE ONES.—The Russell Publishing Company still keeps up its character of being one of those monthly visitors which our children welcome with genuine glee. "Pa, has *Our Little Ones* come?" is a frequent inquiry at our desk.

### Correspondence.

MR. EDITOR,—At the recent meeting of the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec, your introductory sermon opened with a quotation from Bishop Lightfoot, which you correctly characterized as a "wondrous paragraph," containing not a single overstrained statement, but strictly adhering to the direct teaching of the New Testament oracle, in proof of which you gave a catena of texts. You said we are justified in accepting these statements as embodying the teachings of the New Testament. Then, in explaining what we thus accept, you affirmed, with marvellous inconsistency, as it seems to me, that we accept "the overturning of all ecclesiastical polity *de jure divino*." If you had said we accept the overturning of all ecclesiastical polity *nor de jure divino*, it would have been but the natural and harmonious conclusion from the premises. Bishop Lightfoot sketches a plan of ecclesiastical polity according to which the early Churches were constituted. That plan was evolved either by Divine Inspiration or Divine Providence, or both. We have not merely a historical record of what it was, but it is *taught*; the teaching is *oracular*; it embodies an expression of the Divine will. All this you assert, and then go on to tell us that in accepting these New Testament teachings we accept "the overturning of all ecclesiastical polity by Divine right." Rather, do we not accept the overturning of all ecclesiastical polity which cannot plead Divine right? You go on to ask, "But has God written His will only on the pages of inspiration?" and proceed to argue that He has also revealed His will in providence. Readily granted. There is no clashing, however, between these two revelations. The after revelation is but the fuller development of the former. It is the new branch, the opening blossom, the developed fruit, that grow from the tree planted in the New Testament. You take the ground that subsequent social changes call for important modifications of the New Testament model, and you instance the case of a Church of newly-converted Hottentots, which, though possessing "the inalienable right to select its presiding officers," you consider ought not to be entrusted with that right. I might reply, if the right be "inalienable," who dare or can take it away? But let me

remind you, that the plan of Church polity sketched by Lightfoot was put in operation in just such cases as that which you have supposed. Churches of newly-converted heathens came into existence in New Testament times, and though consisting of members ignorant as Hottentots, exercised the same inalienable rights as the Church at Jerusalem, Antioch, or Ephesus. Lightfoot's "wondrous paragraph" omits one most essential feature of every such Church, viz., Christ in the midst, enlightening, guiding and controlling by His Spirit, the smallest band of believers gathered in His name. I can see how your supposed Hottentot Church and the Boston *Congregationalist's* German Church might be greatly benefited by the advice and fellowship of adjacent and more highly intelligent Churches; but their function of "much oversight and care" is an assumption of ecclesiastical authority which not merely modifies Lightfoot's plan, but overthrows it. And I confess that I know of no Church "among us," and can conceive of no German Church in the United States, nor any Hottentot Church in "mid-Africa," that would not be more degraded by deprivation of its "inalienable rights" than by any unwise exercise of them. It is the part of the missionary-pastor, and the duty of better-informed neighbouring Churches, to instruct their brethren in the proper use of their rights—not to filch them away. It would take too much space to discuss the particulars of your sermon *seriatim*; let me come to the pith of the matter. You fail to find "a command, either express or implied," requiring us to fashion our assemblies after the New Testament plan; and you ask, "Can I be convicted of ignorance if I say I find none?" I will not say you can be convicted of ignorance, but I think you can be shown to be in error. I am not concerned to challenge your position as "uncongregational," though it is thoroughly so. It is equally "unpresbyterian." My main trouble with it is that it seems to me plainly unscriptural. The Christian Church is a Divine institution. Its foundations were laid by men who acted under inspiration and authority from above. A special illumination and guidance were vouchsafed to them. Only under these would it have been safe for the Master to say, " whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." They claimed to act infallibly and authoritatively in these matters. Your text is one of many assertions of this. Elsewhere Paul declares that by apostolic authority he set things in order everywhere according to one plan. "So I ordain in all Churches." The Church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." It is not a shifting institution, liable to be metamorphosed by social changes. Circumstances may vary, but principles remain the same. If God, by special