

Here is a man who wanted an excuse for leaving his Church. He had none. He asked his imagination for one and got it promptly. He goes over to some little nondescript body, and perhaps that body is small enough to cackle over him on his arrival. For a time he does nothing but talk about his new connection. After a while he finds his new friends are human—some of them very human. They have poor services very often, poor singing quite often, quarrels occasionally and collections quite frequently. Ask that man what he gained by leaving and his answer, if he tells the truth, will substantially be—“*The big drum is such a comfort to me.*”

Here is a congregation, a part of which has become restless. They want a change. No one knows why and they don't know themselves. They draw on their imaginations and conclude that if they were just vacant they could get a pastor who would stand head and shoulders over every other pastor in their part of the world. They become vacant. They call two or three times and are refused. Finally, after much quarrelling and wrangling, those who have not been wearied or worried out of the Church succeed in getting a pastor. There is a little splurge made over him as long as he is *new*, but it is soon admitted by everybody but the restless few that he is not as good a preacher, not as good a pastor, and, what is worse, not nearly as good a man as the old pastor. Ask the men who raised the disturbance what they gained by it and, if they tell the truth, they will say something equivalent to this—“*The big drum is such a comfort to us.*”

Young Timothy wishes to study for the ministry, but has got the idea that none of the theological colleges in Canada have the necessary educating power to put his intellect in form for preaching and doing pastoral work: Perhaps he is right. A good deal of power and skill are necessary for the training of certain grades of intellect. So Timothy goes across the lines or across the water in search of a college capable of doing him justice. Of course he writes from his seat of learning inviting his student friends to follow him immediately and wonders how men endowed with reason can remain in such slow institutions as our Canadian churches afford. Timothy returns to find that he neither preaches better, nor speaks better, nor writes better, nor does any better than the *average* man who got his education in Canada. Ask him what he gained by leaving his country and making such a fuss, and the answer may be the exact equivalent of—“*The big drum was such a comfort to me.*”

For some reason a minister becomes dissatisfied with his church relations in Canada. He hears and reads marvellous things about the churches on the other side of the lines. He has a hazy kind of idea that the position of minister in the States is very much better than the position of a minister in Canada.

He goes over there and finds that although a few congregations in large cities do more for their minister than any of ours can do, many of them are unable or unwilling to do as much. He finds, too, that in that country a minister has all the difficulties to contend against that he has in Canada, and a good many more than that, happily, we know little or nothing about. At the end of a dozen years say to him, quietly: “Now, brother, what did you gain by coming over here?” Perhaps he may admit that he gained nothing, and perhaps he may have a reason that is just as good as—“*The big drum is such a comfort to me.*”

The Church is not, by any means, the only place in which people follow the big drum.

A young man in business gets the idea that nothing can be done in Canada. He hears and reads fabulous stories about business chances in the West. He goes out there and for a time is electrified with the prospects. He wonders that any one can live in such a slow, stick-in-the-mud place as Canada. He remains there for some years and if he makes money it often goes as fast as it comes. This is not, by any means, true of all, for thousands of Canadians are doing well in the West, but it is sadly true of many. Years roll on and our young man comes home to see his friends. He finds quite often that some of the young men he left have made a nice little home for their nice little wives and families, have a nice little business and a nice little balance in the bank, while he, perhaps, has nothing but big talk about the West and big ague in his bones. The big drum did not bring him much comfort.

Some of our Ontario farmers have been following the big drum lately. Suffering from that restlessness which men who have worked hard in their youth are very liable to feel in after years when success leaves them little to do but think about themselves, they pulled up their stakes and moved to the North-West. This is a good thing to do if a man *must* go some place, but a miserable mistake if he is comfortable in Ontario. Ask that man who left Ontario years ago and settled on a prairie farm how much he gained by the change and nine times out of ten the answer won't have any more sense than—“*The big drum is such a comfort to me.*”

Three years ago the big drum sounded loudly in Winnipeg. Our business men responded nobly to the call and rushed to the front in hundreds. They put more money in mud-holes around the city and in several paper towns and cities than would have endowed half-a-dozen colleges and sent a dozen missionaries to any part of the world. The end of the big drum got knocked in and it brings comfort to nobody now.

Moral: Don't make any serious change in life unless you have some better reason for making it than that the *big drum is a comfort to you.*