

[FOR THE RECORD.]

THINGS THAT MIGHT BE MENDED.

It is a frequent remark by those not of the Presbyterian form of worship, who may pay an occasional visit to the "Kirk"—"Well, after all your minister is evidently a superior man, and preaches well and sound doctrine too, but what an awful length of a sermon!" Now, sir, I must candidly allow, that there is often much reason in this remark; many of our ministers seem to think (to say nothing of two hours) that an hour and a quarter at a time is quite a moderate sermon, although, I believe, in the majority of cases, there is only one service consisting of two discourses with a psalm between, and perhaps a short prayer. Now, sir, I maintain, that the bulk of our people, who are farmers and mechanics, and not accustomed to pay attention so long either to reading or preaching, would benefit more by a short exposition of a portion of Scripture, not to exceed half an hour, and a sermon afterwards, in no instance to exceed in delivery one hour, but to take forty-five minutes as an average. There is no disputing the truth, that too much mental food is as injurious as too much bodily food. Some good people say, if you cannot spend a few hours listening to the preaching of the word on this earth, what will it be in heaven? I answer to that, sir, That the soul will not be encumbered by its fleshly burden in heaven, and all the faculties will be purified and exalted. Here we cannot get quit of our bodily infirmities, and the very best, even of ministers, are liable to be overcome by the connection between soul and body; and it is not such an easy thing, in summer particularly, to walk three or four miles, and then attend with profit three or four hours to the services of the church. Many ministers, also, offer up prayers of from twenty minutes to half an hour's duration, quite forgetting that prayer given as an example, in the sixth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, and many of the female part of our congregations find it impossible to stand all the time from fatigue. On this point I would humbly suggest, for the consideration of our ministers, a good old Scotch custom of offering up *Our Lord's Prayer*, once every Sabbath; children, especially, dearly love to hear it; and even if they do not understand the sermon, still that most comprehensive and most beautiful and spiritual of all prayers, is the more deeply engraven in their hearts. Then, sir, on sacramental occasions, it is quite common to have services from eleven in the forenoon to four or five o'clock in the afternoon, wearing out ministers, elders, and people, in the most complete manner possible. If the people have attended faithfully on the days of preparation—and, I believe, there is much improvement in this particular—what is the benefit of giving an hour's sermon on the day itself besides the necessary addresses? A short and pithy recapitulation of the previous discourses would be more beneficial, and in like manner, when the strictly sacramental services of the day are ended, another short and energetic address would tend more to general edification, and to fixing good impressions, than another long sermon of an hour's duration. There is another point susceptible of much improvement in our churches,—that is the singing. It seems quite a wonder to hear good singing, unless in one or two of the city churches, and I fear, many of our ministers must have little taste for music, as I well recollect in my native town of Edinburgh, that the ministers used to stir up their people to sing, by reminding them from the pulpit, of their duty in this respect, and it was quite animating and encouraging to hear the singing in St. Mary's, or St. Stephen's, or St. George's, and indeed in most of the churches, not one here and there raising a solitary song, but a full, harmonious, enthusiastic, heart-stirring chorus, from every pew. Hoping you will excuse the freedom of my remarks, I remain yours most sincerely,
Gue'ph, 16th April, 1852. GOOD INTENT.

[FOR THE RECORD.]

CRUEL PERSECUTION.

It is often said, and said with truth, that the spirit of Popery is always the same, but it is not often, especially in Canada West, that we meet with so practical an illustration of this fact, as that which forms the subject of the following narrative:—

Some years ago, a very poor Roman Catholic family, from Ireland, settled in this place. The parents were obliged to put out to service several of their children. One little girl was taken in by a kind lady, from benevolence, and something in the child's countenance which seemed to commend her. She was very ignorant, but desirous to learn. At length she began to read God's word. A brother, somewhat older than herself, often visited her on the Sabbath, and with her endeavoured to read the Bible. The lady with whom his sister resided, gave him a Testament, and he was desirous to read it. He began to attend the Sabbath School, and to procure books from the library. Unhappily, this came to the priest's ears, who immediately told his father that these were bad books, and that they would ruin his child. He required, with all priestly authority, that his son should throw away the Testament, receive no more Sabbath School books, and immediately cease to attend. Sad to say, these injunctions were implicitly obeyed. But for this interference, this young man might have been a useful and honorable member of society, if not a polished stone in the temple of Christ. It is said the Testament was burnt. Instead now of visiting his sister to learn with her to read God's word, he became quite displeased with her for doing so. Not deterred by her parents and brother, she continued to read the Scripture, and to advance rapidly in the knowledge of the truth. At length, she began with some acquaintances to attend my ministry, and in the early part of last summer became a member of the Bible-class. Before this and for some time after, for fear of her parents and friends, she went occasionally to mass. Her brother threatened several times, if she did not leave off attending the Bible-class and the church, and attend mass, that he would shoot her. She was so disgusted with the "dumb show," and its gross idolatry, that she declared she would never again attend mass. She had often expressed a desire to be received into the Church, that she might shew forth her love to Jesus by obeying His injunction—"This do in remembrance of me." Previous to our communion, on the first Sabbath of last February, she became a candidate for church membership, and after several interviews with her, when she was made fully aware of the nature of the ordinance, the qualifications necessary for its right and profitable observance, and the persecution to which, in all probability, such a step would expose her, she was admitted to membership. At this her friends were very much annoyed. Her father threatened to kill her. She has been waylaid on her way to the Bible-class, and urged to throw away the Bible. She has suffered persecution even from those who should have been her natural protectors.

The very tender mercies of Popery are cruel, when even a mother, by its soul-ruining influence, can outrage a mother's feelings. Seeing that severity would not do, her father came to try persuasion. He told her how kind (cruel kindness) they would all be to her, and that she would be at liberty to go to what church she pleased, did she but go home with him. She firmly refused. He quickly changed his tone for that of wrath, and in the true spirit of popery, told her she was possessed of the devil, and would go to hell. His daughter is steadfast in the truth, and her deportment, under her persecution, is as becometh a Christian. She has been prevented for the last few Sabbaths from enjoying the public means of grace, which is of itself an affliction to her. I trust she is taught by the spirit of God, though

the papists say, and I have good reason to believe it came from the lips of the priest himself, that the Free Church and the devil have carried away Mary Hyland. It is probable she will soon be anathematized, that she may be separated entirely from all that is good, and given over to everything that is dreadful, and the chain of Popery more firmly riveted around the necks of others. May the great Shepherd of Israel shield her, and all in similar circumstances, from the cruel hands of the Man of Sin. A. W.

PORT DOVER, April, 1852.

[FOR THE RECORD.]

PRACTICAL REMARKS.

"Who can understand his errors?" Ps. xix. v. 12

This question, like many other questions in Scripture, is intended to convey an idea of a strongly negative kind; and is equivalent to a declaration, that no one of the human family, be his powers of penetration or observation what they may, is able fully to understand his errors.—The connection in which the question occurs is worthy of notice. The Psalmist had been meditating on the power and spirituality and excellence of the law of God—viewing it not merely as a rule for the regulation of the outward conduct, but as extending its authority to the thoughts, feelings and affections of the inmost soul, and as claiming the subjection of every purpose, desire and motive of the heart, and every act of the mind; and in this view of God's holy law, turning his thoughts to his own heart, and character and conduct, he could see that there was throughout his whole man—in every part of his constitution mental and spiritual, a possibility of disagreement,—so that acting, speaking, thinking, desiring, hoping, loving or hating, he might be in error,—and this to such an extent as to surpass his powers of understanding—"Who can understand his errors?" By "errors" here, we are to understand,—not those deviations from God's law, or transgressions of it, which are commonly known and spoken of, as manifest sins,—but those which proceed from want of knowledge of the law,—the want of acquaintance with its extent and spirituality,—or the want of discernment how to apply it to our particular circumstances and actions. They are faults through ignorance,—faults committed without our perceiving them to be faults,—and which ourselves and others allow to pass without reckoning them to our list of sins at all,—from want of discernment sufficient to enable us to view them in the light of the Divine law. Not taking into account, then, those sins which are plainly pointed out in the word of God, and which the simplest reader can scarcely fail to discover, it is obvious that we are chargeable with a vast number and variety of "errors" in heart and life, to which we may not be able to attach particular names, and which are constantly escaping our observation, but which are, nevertheless, sufficient to constitute us *sinful* in the light of God's law;—yet it is not every man, nor even every professing Christian, that is prepared to assent to this truth, and to enter into the spirit of the Psalmist's exclamation—"Who can understand his errors?"

It is declared by the apostle, that, "by the law is the knowledge of sin;"—and again, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;"—from which we infer that our capacity to discover our sins and "errors," is in proportion to our acquaintance with the purity, spirituality and extent of the law of God. The man who knows nothing of the authority of God or of his law, is not much troubled with a consciousness of sin,—the man who knows but little of the law of God, supposes that, at most, he is chargeable with only a few sins, and these not very great, and chiefly connected with his relations to his neighbours. The man who reads the Bible only cursorily, sees only his obligation to perform certain moral duties, and admits guilt only where he