

Supply of Vacancies.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—In my last I endeavored to show some of the difficulties under which vacant congregations labour in obtaining a settlement. I will now endeavor to show some of those under which ministers without labour. The probationers list published by the authority of the Home Mission Committee show that for the last three years the number of vacancies have on an average been three to each probationer. Hence, when a minister's name is found on the list for two years with no better prospect of settlement than at the beginning, there would appear to be no escape from one of two conclusions—viz. Such a minister must either be entirely unacceptable and an utter failure or the congregations must be entirely too fastidious. It is true that the conduct of some congregations would at first sight, appear to give some grounds for the charge. For example, a congregation which offered \$700 and a manse, heard a minister who pleased them in everything else except that he had a slight pimple on his face when he preached to them, which prevented him from making as good an appearance in the pulpit as he otherwise would, and though this blemish was only temporary and had disappeared in a few days, it was given as the cause of his rejection.

An older of a congregation which offered \$600 without a manse, and only expected their minister to travel 24 miles and preach three times each Sabbath said they had heard a minister who had pleased them both in his preaching and appearance, but a man in the congregation whom they all considered an excellent judge of human nature had given it as his opinion that he was a slow man. He was asked what evidence he had given of being a slow man; it was answered that he had arrived at their R. R. Station on one occasion too late for the train, and it was suggested to him that the train was nearly due; such reasons may appear to be trivial, but when we consider that forty or fifty candidates are sometimes sent to a congregation they cannot all be employed, and some reason must be given for the rejection of candidates, it is little wonder that reasons should sometimes be given which are not the best. Indeed the great wonder appears to be that congregations have not become more fastidious under a system so admirably calculated to train them in the habit of fault-finding. I will now give some of the experience of a minister who received more than forty appointments from the Home Mission Committee. In ten appointments Gaelic was a *sine qua non*, and the Home Mission Committee does not enquire whether a minister has Gaelic or not before he is sent to a Gaelic congregation, and these are all closed to the man who has no Gaelic. Fifteen had called ministers—twelve were unprepared two were semi-prepared. Six had applied for students. At length he was sent to a congregation which was prepared to hear candidates with a view to calling a minister. Salary offered \$7000 without a manse.

He had an opportunity of being present at a congregational meeting over which the moderator of session presided. He (the moderator of session) promised to give them a hearing of two or three popular ministers whom he named (all settled ministers of course) after which they should fix upon one and give him a call.

He likewise reminded them that the probationers sent into the Presbytery could claim a hearing in some of the vacancies. Observe it was one of the settled ministers they were recommended to call. The probationers were only to be countenanced far enough to "get a hearing" because the rules of the Church required it.

The time for the probationer, however, to get his hearing is generally after a minister has been called. He is then employed to preach a couple of Sabbaths and read the Edict for induction. One of your correspondents (of Nova Scotia) has treated of the extent to which patronage is practiced in the C. P. Church, but the half is not told. The evil would be slight if the influence of moderators of sessions and others who are disposed to act the patron was used in lessening the number of vacancies by getting probationers or ministers without charge settled over them, but such is rarely the case. With very few exceptions it is used in unsettling ministers who are settled and getting them translated to some of the vacant charges. You will see that the number of vacancies is not lessened by this process, but on the other hand the published reports of the Home Mission Board, show that the number of so-called vacancies is increasing. Ministers without charge and probationers are employed for the most part in following up those settled ministers keeping vacancies open, then reading Edicts for their induction and in some cases supplying their pulpits for them, while they preached as candidates in some of the vacancies under the plea of administering the communion. It is a matter of regret that the administration of this solemn ordinance is frequently used as an occasion to cavess for a situation. We care far from insinuating that there is any intentional injustice in the matter, but ministers all have the friends, and when congregations get confused and divided as they are so liable to do from the number of candidates, and ask their advice of the moderators of session, they very naturally recommend their friends, and as the probationers and ministers without charge are strangers to them, they have no knowledge of them, nor interest in them, hence unconsciously they inflict on them a great injustice. If the object of the Home Mission Committee were to drive ministers out of the Church and the Country a better system could scarcely be devised. When a minister's name is placed on the probationer's list his ministerial standing is ignored. He is called a probationer, which means a student who has not sustained his ordination trials. If he is a man any way advanced in life his characters of settlement are destroyed even if

he should be sent to vacancies (which is rarely the case) as most congregations if satisfied to make choice of a student prefer a young man to one advanced in life. The question is frequently asked why do so many of our ministers go to the States and to the other Provinces. Those who have had any practical experience of the working of this scheme need have no difficulty in assigning at least one good cause.

When a minister demits his charge he must demit his ministerial standing with it, which he does by placing his name on the probationer's list, or set the rules of the Church at defiance by going to vacancies on his own account. If he is a man with a high sense of honour it is little wonder that he should prefer leaving the country to do doing either. Your correspondent (Nova Scotia) gives the inadequate salaries paid to the ministers in Ontario as the main cause of ministers leaving the country. This may have its weight, but it appears to me to be trifling compared with the degradation to which ministers are subjected by this probationer's scheme. The number of ministers, who, like Mr. Laing the author of the scheme, disregard its regulations and go to vacancies, on their own account makes it much more intolerable for those who abide by its rules. It is generally conceded that the convener of the sub-committee of Home Missions is diligent and pains taking in the discharge of his duties. The same may be said generally of the conveners of Presbyterian Committees. It is also conceded that the scheme is good in its general design. So was the monster balloon which was constructed last season to cross the Atlantic. It simply would not go? Was all the difficulty. The "best machine may utterly fail to do its work on account of one loose screw. It is said that the "Villo du Havre" was lost because there was in it one rusty screw which prevented the machinery from working. All that the probationer's scheme requires is a very little re-adjustment and tightening up of loose screws. The following slight changes might be sufficient at the present time, 1st. The word "vacancy" should be understood in its ordinary acceptance viz., a situation in which employment is offered to the first suitable candidate. According to the usages of the Canada Presbyterian Church, a vacancy means simply a preaching station, and may or may not be prepared to call a minister. Probably not more than one third of the reported vacancies would be prepared. It is no unusual thing for Presbyteries to refuse leave to a congregation on the list of vacancies, to moderate in a call to a minister. This is an anomaly which should not be allowed to exist. The word probationer should be employed in its proper ecclesiastical meaning. The sense in which it is employed in the C. P. Church cannot fail to mislead and deceive Presbyterians from other countries. The probationer's list should be made up exclusively of probationers who have expressed a desire for a settlement—at present many congregations are on the list totally unprepared to call ministers, while ministers and probationers have their names on it and are only traveling for their health and to see the country. Such ministers deceive congregations who want ministers—and such congregations can only deceive ministers who want settlements. The positions of ministers and congregations should be accurately defined—such influential churches as Knox Church Galt, and Cooke's Church, Toronto, and all who are desirous of supplying their own pulpits—and can satisfy their Presbyteries that they are prepared to do so should be removed from the probationer's list. This would be only granting to them a liberty which they take under the present system and would be only making a virtue of necessity. The number of congregations left on the probationer's list of vacancies would probably be reduced to one third of the present number.

No minister should be allowed on any consideration to preach in a vacancy on the probationer's list except after a minister has been chosen. All the vacancies found unprepared to call ministers should be placed on the list of Mission Stations. Ordained ministers should be profitably employed in these Mission Stations in order to prepare them for regular pastorate. When so prepared, those missionaries would most likely become the pastors. Such settlements would be most likely to be happy as the parties would not be strangers to each other. When a congregation has been six months on the list of vacancies it should unless good reasons can be shown why a settlement has not been effected, be required to choose between being transferred to the list of Mission Stations and supplying its own pulpit. A probationer whose name has been on the list more than six months should be required to choose between being employed as a missionary and finding employment for himself. Their slight changes would doubtless be productive of much good.

D. McNAUGHTON.
Komblo, March 19th, 1874.

The Eldership.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—Whether or not the author of the contribution on the duties and qualifications of ruling elders, which appeared in a recent number of the PRESBYTERIAN, is chargeable with holding the theory of a *modified episcopacy*, as alleged by "Presbyter" in his strictures; this at least is certain,—that the views therein presented for the consideration of ruling elders, accord perfectly with the status and work assigned them by the Presbyterianism of the present day.

As regards the purity of official standing, of office-bearers that teach and rule, which "Presbyter" shows clearly enough to be according to the divine mind, in the institution of the office, no labored argument is necessary to prove that ecclesiasticalism has been shed from the office of ruling elder much of it: New Testament character, the restoration of which would necessitate a revolution, in not in the principles, at least in the practice of these churches of the present

day, that recognize this class of office-bearers.

Let us notice briefly some of those peculiarities of practice which obtain in our Presbyterian Churches, and which indicate as correctly as legislative enactment can, the estimate formed of the ruling elders standing and work.

It is worthy of notice, though we have never heard a satisfactory reason assigned for the practice, that, while ministers of the Gospel are ordained to the office of the ministry, by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, and afterward receive the right hand of fellowship from their co-presbyteries, in the case of ruling elders, the apostolic ceremony of the imposition of hands is dispensed with, this class of office-bearers only receiving the right hand of fellowship from their brethren of an inferior rank.

Again,—in the trial of office-bearers, we find that while ruling elders are to be dealt with by Sessions, ministers are amenable to Presbyteries alone.

Still further,—we find it laid down as a standing rule, that a bench of elders is powerless to transact business, however pressing, in the absence of the pastor, who is appointed perpetual moderator, or some other minister of the Gospel in his stead.

Once more,—in the matter of attendance at meetings of the supreme courts, we also find that, whilst ministers are bound by their ordination vows, to give a conscientious attendance on church courts, no such obligation is laid on ruling elders, so that their presence at meetings of Presbytery, Synod, and Assembly, can only be regarded by them as permissible; but in no sense obligatory on their part. This, rather than lack of interest or ability, may be regarded as the key to that diffidence which prevents so many of our ruling elders from taking any active share in the business of these courts, and doubtless also, to some extent, authorizes the monopolizing of what may, by way of distinction, be termed the *more honorable kinds of work* by ministers of the Gospel. If any of your readers objects to this charge of monopoly, why, I ask, do ruling elders never find their way to the moderator's chair? Why, at meetings or delegations of Presbytery for the ordination of ministers, they are not accorded the privilege of joining with their ministerial brethren in the imposition of hands? Why are they not required in turn, to lead the devotions of these courts before the commencement of business? If our ruling elders are invested with equal powers and privileges in church courts, by the Church's Head, by whose authority are such distinctions made.

With the limitations and modifications, by which the office of ruling elder is circumscribed, our consistency could hardly be questioned, were we to pin the dogma of Apostolic succession to our creed, and accept ordination at the hands of a Lord Bishop. While the efforts of "Presbyter" to remove misapprehension, by presenting in its proper light, an important spiritual office, are worthy of all praise, they are likely to be followed by small success, so long as these misapprehensions find a full warrant from practices authorized by Church law, and which find their way into every department of the Church's work.

That Basis.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

MY DEAR SIR,—We should not despair of Union although some are opposed to it. Please read the following extracts from the pen of the late Dr. Ferrier, of Caledonia, of date October 10th, 1859, and published in the organ of the U. P. Church about the same time. "Besides, they (the Free Church) give this new doctrine of theirs a prominence which seems equal to that of Christ being King of the Church. Christ is King of the Church, which is his popular Kingdom, but this is a fundamental doctrine. His subsidiary Kingdom, which is his headship over all persons and things out of the Church, is not of equal prominence,—although it is not an unimportant doctrine. But Christ's headship over the nations, which when rightly viewed, is just a part of his subsidiary Kingdom; is put by our Brethren, in their perverted view of it, on a level with his headship over the Church.

"This is altogether unwarranted." Again he says "as a doctrine side by side with the headship of Christ over the Church, we seriously object to the Free Church wishing to impose upon us their theory of Christ being King of nations, especially in a Basis of Union. They may keep it as long as they are influenced by sectarian prejudices, and as long as they allow themselves to be influenced by leaders, without searching the Scriptures for themselves, to see if those things are so, but we must keep by our own views, presenting an example to them of what is Scriptural truth on this important subject.

The theory of a civil establishment of religion is imbedded in the theory of our brethren, and if they will not give it up they must leave us to reject it.

We tell our brethren plainly that we cannot take in their interpretation of the fourth article. Here lies the difference. And where in the Christian, who in the right exercise of charity—of that charity which "thinketh no evil and beareth all things," who is not prepared to forbear on this single point. If we can forbear with our brethren—although we think their theory groundless, surely they ought to forbear with us. Far be it from us to prevent or retard this Union, for which so many ministers and people in both churches are anxious.

I could quote largely to the same import from the U. P. Magazine, now before me, on the consummation of the Union between that Body and the Free Church. Dr. Ferrier fearlessly proclaims his views on the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ over his Church. So did many of the ministers of both Churches at the same time; and both churches now forming one compact and united Church still hold their respective and peculiar views on the doctrine of the Headship of Christ.

Just so, Mr. Editor, it is a question of mutual forbearance amongst a body Christians and of brethren holding the same views as regards the fundamental truths of religion, nearly allied to each other by a common origin and a common aim, but differing in judgment on an extraneous article of belief in the theory of Church government.

It is taken for granted on all hands that such a difference of opinion really exists. In spite of this difference of opinion the last Presbyterian Union was consummated. I know of no modulation of the doctrine of Christ's Headship over the Church on the part of the "Free Church"—that would not meet the views of the Church of Scotland in Canada. If we must discuss this "vexed question" let us approach it in the spirit of brotherly love.

Logic, talent, learning, and dogmatic utterances, will kill the "Basis." It cannot live under such a load; only let the poor basis breathe in its native air,—in the congenial atmosphere of Christian love in which it was framed and it will do very well. Under such an influence even the far famed "Declaration of Independence" will tame down from its seeming ferocity into the meekness and gentleness of the lamb. Toleration of each others' opinion and not unity of judgment on every point is and must be the principle of the Basis itself.

To take away this would be like taking away the keystone of the arch on which the whole superstructure rests. Is it consistent, is it seemly at this stage of the proceedings to call up dead memories, to revive impracticable theories, to foster a spirit of *inveective and recrimination*; in a word to review the entire history of the past thirty years,—import the metaphysical subtlety which characterizes the aristocratic school of Britain into this discussion and dwell upon side issues that have no natural connection with the question? If a union of all the Presbyterian churches in British North America take place all this sort of thing must be buried in oblivion.

There may have been a time in the history of Presbyterianism when this "ad captandam" style of writing, and speaking served to rouse the masses to espouse the cause of a party. That day has happily passed away. Intelligence and education are now so universally diffused throughout all classes,—high and low,—rich and poor,—that the fossils of a former age,—dug up for the amusement of a world—are familiar to a child. Truth cannot now be tortured by a subtle logic with impunity.

I repeat it,—the question at issue is not one of *logic*, but of *toleration and forbearance*. The Law of Christ, which is above all other laws—must and will ultimately break down every partition wall of prejudice and caste. It will compel every Christian with the irresistible might and authority which it possesses to do to others as he would that others should do to him.

W. E. McKAY.

Orangeville, 14th. March, 1874.

Presbytery of Bruce.

This Presbytery held its quarterly meeting at Tiverton, on the 17th and 18th ult. There were 9 ministers and 7 elders present. The following are the most important items of business transacted, viz:—The Rev. Mr. Smith reported that according to appointment, he preached at Tarn, on the 1st Sabbath of January, and declared the Church vacant—that on the following Monday he met with the West Arran Congregation, to ascertain to what extent they would support the ministry under the new arrangement, and that by a resolution of the congregation they promised to pay \$500 annually towards their pastors salary. The report was received, and thanks tendered to Mr. Smith for his diligence. An extract minute of the Presbytery of Montreal was read relative to its action on the call extended to the Rev. Adam Fraser McQueen, by the congregation of Huron, and transmitting an irregular paper to this Presbytery, alleged to have been sent to that Court by certain parties in Huron in opposition to said call. On motion duly made and seconded, it was resolved, "That the Presbytery regrets to find in the hands of the Clerk a document which appears to have been read in the Presbytery of Montreal, notwithstanding the protest of our commissioner, and by it transmitted to this Presbytery, although it had never before been regularly received nor forwarded by any committee of this Church. The Presbytery cannot acknowledge the said document as one on which it can take action, but instruct the Kirk Session of Huron to enquire into the state of the congregation and ascertain whether any change has occurred in relation to said call since the finding of the last meeting of Presbytery and report." The Session of Huron being present and having made the desired enquiries into the state of the congregation in anticipation of the action of Presbytery, submitted a report which was received and considered when the following motion was proposed by Mr. Fraser, seconded by Mr. Straith, and resolved, viz: The Presbytery regret to find by the report of the Session that there is a change in the congregation of Huron with respect to the call, twenty families, as appears who had signed the call, having since signified their opposition thereto, besides a large number of adherents. But this Presbytery does not regard the change as being of such a nature as to make it advisable to test the matter of further proceedings in the call." A petition was read from certain members and adherents of the congregation of Huron and commissioners heard praying to be erected into a separate congregation. It was resolved to cite all parties interested to the next meeting of Presbytery, to be held at Kincardine on the last Tuesday of June, at 2 o'clock p.m. On application made by the congregation of Fort Elgin and Dunblane; it was agreed to hold a special meeting of Presbytery at Fort Elgin on the 31st inst., at 10 o'clock a.m., to moderate in a call to a minister and to sustain it. The Rev. Mr. Ferguson to preach and Mr. Straith to preside. Circular letters were read from the Presbyteries of Chatham, Montreal, and Guelph, intimating their intention to apply to the next General Assembly to have the Rev. Mr. Frederick Smith, a minister of the Episcopal Methodist Church, Mr. Gavin

Sinclair a licentiate of the Free Church of Scotland, and Mr. John Henry Perkins, a minister of the Presbyterian Church of the United States. The following commissioners were appointed to the General Assembly, viz: Messrs. Tolmie and Davidson, by rotation, and Anderson and Currie by election, and Messrs. Patterson, Dewar, McKinnon, and Rowland elders. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Dewar, elder, were appointed members of the Assembly's Committee on bills and overtures. Mr. Straith and Mr. McKinnon, elder, were appointed members of the Synod's Committee on bills and overtures. Rev. Mr. McPherson of Stratford was nominated as the Moderator of the General Assembly. Messrs. Fraser and Straith were appointed a committee to prepare an overture amount Home Mission regulations. Mr. Cameron and the Clerk were appointed a committee to receive and transmit to the Clerk of General Assembly the reports of Kirk Sessions and congregations amount Union. The evening session was devoted to a conference on the state of religion. The conference was introduced by the reading of an excellent paper on the revival of religion by the Rev. John Fraser, after which all the members of Court, lay and clerical, expressed their views as to the best means of promoting a revival of religion. The meeting was one of very great interest and profit both to the brethren of the Presbytery and to the congregation.—A. S. FORBES, Pres. Clerk.

Presbytery of Simcoe.

This Presbytery met at Barrie, on Tuesday, 24th March. Ten ministers and three elders present. The resignation of the charge of Knox Church, Oro, by Mr. Ferguson was accepted after hearing of parties. Mr. Cameron, of Bradford, was appointed to preach and declare the congregation vacant on Sabbath, April 12th, and Mr. Fairbairn to act as Moderator of Sessions of Knox and Guthrie Churches. In view of parting with Mr. Ferguson, the Presbytery adopted a resolution recording their regret in separating from a brother with whom much pleasant intercourse had been enjoyed, and whose attendance at the meetings had been so regular; their esteem for him as a Christian and as a minister, faithful and diligent in the duties of his office, though tried with peculiar difficulties, and their prayer that he may speedily find another sphere of labor, and have abundant success in the work of the ministry. The Session Records were called for, and having been examined by committees, were attested in accordance with the reports. A form of constitution, adopted by the congregations of Stayner and Sunnidale, was presented for the sanction of the court, and with a slight amendment, was approved. Reports of Sessions in answer to Circular of General Assembly's Committee, on state of religion, were taken into consideration. Seventeen sessions sent in reports. Reports were received, and a resolution in connection with them was framed for transmission to the Synod. Postal cards were read bearing intimation of the purpose of the Montreal Presbytery to apply to the General Assembly for leave to admit Mr. Gavin Sinclair, a licentiate of the Free Church of Scotland to the ministry of this Church; and of the Presbytery of Chatham to make the same application in favour of Mr. Frederick Smith, of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It was the mind of the brethren present that such intimations should be made in another manner than by the use of post cards. Messrs. M. Fraser, R. D. Fraser, the Clerk, and Mr. Charles Morris, Elder, were appointed to represent the Presbytery on the Synod's Committee on Bills and Overtures. Members of the General Assembly were chosen as follows: By rotation, Messrs. M. Fraser and McKee; by election, Messrs. W. Fraser, Gray, and Rodgers. Ministers; Messrs. Dallas, Morris, McCraw, Simon Fraser, and McWhinnie, Elders. An Overture introduced by Mr. Rodgers was adopted and ordered to be transmitted to the Synod. The Overture sets forth the deficiencies of church accommodation in Muskoka; the efforts already made to provide churches by raising money among the settlers, and from other friends of the Church, the inability of the people of the district to meet all the expenditure necessary to complete proposed plans of supplying the want; and overtures the Synod to authorize an appeal to all the churches in its bounds which may lead to the attainment of the necessary funds. The Home Mission affairs of the Presbytery were next taken up. Applications from two congregations for supplement from the Assembly's Home Mission Committee were sustained, and the Presbytery resolved to ask for grants from the Committee in aid of its numerous mission stations. The clerk's salary was raised to forty dollars per annum. Mr. Luke G. Henderson, a lay catechist, having applied for employment, it was agreed to send his name to the Home Mission Committee. Leave was granted to the congregation of Collingwood to sell part of their property viz.: "Park lots three and four, west of Church street, in the town plot in Sudbury. The next regular meeting was fixed for Tuesday, July 7th.—Rev. MOORE, Clerk.

It is with our souls as it is with our bodies, we sometimes catch cold we know not how.

One Anna Wilkes has brought out a book to establish the theory that Ireland is the ancient "Ur of the Chaldees." Assuming that Shinar is Europe, the authoress proceeds to assign fixed localities to other places which are mentioned as being situated in that land. She concludes, after many speculations, that Ireland, being Ur of the Chaldees, was, therefore, the scene of the "rise of some of the patriarchs," among them of Abraham. She states that probably his father Terah gave name to ancient Tarran and that the Tarran-do-Danann was a colony of the people of Dan. "Now we find," she says, "that Jacob on this point of Gilead took a stone and set it up for a pillar. It is not a little remarkable that on the mound of Tara was a stone sacred and valuable that it was the custom for the high king to crown the kings of Ireland upon it."