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Contributors & Correspondents.

NEW BRUNSWICK.

The Separate School Question—Feeling on the Subject in New Brunswick—A good idea when Practicable—Proposed Ministerial Reciprocity.

(From our own Correspondent.)

The phase of the school question that has been suddenly sprung on the Maritime Provinces by Chauveau's amendment has created intense excitement down here. The utmost astonishment and indignation are felt that the Government as a whole or the major portion of it should for a moment contemplate supporting such an outrage on New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. There is nothing and there has been nothing in our laws to justify such a course. It is a tampering with the constitution that the Protestants of these Provinces will resent for all time to come. Even though the amendment fails to pass, and there is little expectation of its failure just now, the Government now existing will be regarded with suspicion as long as it lives. I speak deliberately when I say that if Separate Schools be fastened on us for all time to come, we will be driven into Annexation as fast as we can go. Such an issue would confirm in the most patent manner what has existed only as a surmise hitherto, though a surmise that has some important facts on which to rest, namely, that Romanising influence predominates in Dominion Councils. Of this I can speak with authority, that whatever other Churches may think and do in the matter, the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces is and will be a unit in resisting to the utmost the introduction of Separate Schools. The members of that Church may be and are divided on the policy and advantages of Confederation, without doubt hitherto the vast majority of them in Nova Scotia were bitterly opposed to that measure, but they will vote as one man when Non-Sectarian Education is touched in any way. The Educational Committee's of the two Provinces forwarded earnest protests against the threatened legislation.

Our position seems to be misunderstood in the Upper Provinces even in Protestant circles. I see that papers otherwise well informed and trustworthy are utterly at sea as to the legislation that was in force in this Province up to the end of last year. It is assumed that Separate Schools had a sort of a footing among us, a semi-official standing so to speak. This is utterly opposed to the facts of the case. The School Act that was in operation when Confederation was accomplished was in its essence not a whit more sectarian than the Act that is now in operation and about which such an outcry is made by the Romanists. In many cases it was not as strictly enforced as the present Act is, but it was in that part of it no way different from the present. It is true that special grants were made by the Legislature to some institutions that were denominational, but in the first place these grants were an annual charge on which a vote was taken year by year; and in the second place the grants were not made on the ground of the institutions being sectarian, but because the managers and promoters of these institutions proposed to provide for a higher degree of instruction than was afforded in the common schools. Let the press of the Upper Provinces take note of that, especially of Montreal. Why if there was no other argument to bring forward than the action of the Minister of Justice when an appeal was carried to the Governor in Council in relation to our present Act, no more requires to be said in favour of the position that Separate Schools never had any footing here. Had there been the slightest shadow of a shade to go upon, the confessedly personal bias of that minister would have led him to disallow that act. But it is waste of words dealing at length with a question that is so abundantly patent to every one that takes the trouble to inquire.

The propriety as well as the advantage of congregations allowing holidays to their pastors has not been acted upon heretofore in this quarter of the Dominion save in isolated cases and at regular intervals. To many such favors have only been a matter of hear-say. We have heard again and again how systematically they do such things in the States, of how not only the two months annually are given with double that from time to time, to go to Europe, but also the expenses were supplied as well; but it was only what was to be expected, and it did not come to us. The present movement was originated in St. John that proposes to secure a partial vacation at least to the pastors. It is that two congregations shall worship as one, occupying the several churches alternately, for the space of two months, thus permitting each pastor to go away for one month. The preliminaries are being arranged at the present time. Now that the matter is broached among the people, that they begin to see the necessity of allowing some rest to men that work as hard as most ministers do, the congregations are prepared to go even further than the proposal which originated with the pastors contemplated. One congregation has told its pastor that a month will be given whether any arrangement of the kind above mentioned be carried out or not. This proves that it was just what of thought that prevented the offer from being made long ago; but then want of thought is not so very innocent as some imagine. For no other reason than that the people did not think the lives of pastors have been harassed, the enjoyment of life eaten out, and the existence shattered by many years. Nevertheless it is pleasant to record the fact that when a good movement is presented in all candour and honesty our people are not slow to take hold of it. It is just this that we must not weary in educating, educating—diffusing intelligence on every side—doing this without fear, honestly and aboveboard—and all that we hope to accomplish will be accomplished. Whether the funds will be forthcoming for the expenses of the trip which the pastor desires to take remains to be seen. I am afraid if this desirable corollary be not attended to the trips in some cases will be very short, and that for a reason that I need not further specify. If the suggestion that I threw out in a former letter is not to bear any fruit, I mean that about exchanges between here and the Upper Provinces, we will, at all events, have something to fall back upon. I am unwilling to believe that nothing will come of that suggestion, even though it should be delayed for another year.

A proposal has been made by a writer in the Halifax Witness that our two Synods down here should take steps to carry a measure of the same nature as that which is to be brought before the negotiating bodies in Scotland; that is, that ministers of either Synod would be eligible for settlement in the congregations of both without any let or hindrance. It is thought that such a preliminary step would smooth the way for the incorporation that cannot be far off. I do not know whether such a preliminary is at all necessary. If it be, however, the committees can easily frame a deliverance to that effect. There is no earthly reason why such an inter-ecclésiastical relationship should not be established, that is, if any bar to such action now exists.

St. John, 29th May, 1872.

CHARITY TO THE POOR.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—It seems to me that some practical and systematic method of alleviating the wants of the poor in our congregations, is necessary. I do not know that our Presbyterian churches are as much distinguished in these matters as others. A committee should be appointed wherever necessary, whose duty it would be to discover cases of real want, and a fund reserved for the relieving of the same. True, in a country like ours this is not so much needed, but many an old faithful and tried servant of the Church could be found in destitute circumstances. I do not recollect ever hearing a sermon on the subject of this branch of charity. If religion is intended to make us unselfish and self-denying nothing can be more conducive to those ends than heartily giving, blessing both the giver and the receiver. I hope that this subject may at some future time be brought up for discussion in our Assemblies. Perhaps some Sabbath day's collections could be devoted to this noble purpose, or a poor box be placed in the church for voluntary subscriptions.

Trouton.

Heaven is called a world of light. The best books say there is no night there; that the face of God is the sun that fills it with a day that can have no end. Now all the hearts that burn with His love here are the lamps that shine with the same light that His face gives out to all who live in heaven. And the earth grows more like heaven the more of such lamps there are lit on it.

PROBATIONERS SCHEME.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—As what is called the probationers scheme is attracting the attention of the Church to a considerable extent, and as the subject will shortly be discussed at the General Assembly, I propose giving a few thoughts on it. As the best way to judge of a system is from its actual working, I will give the experience of a few of those who have been employed under this scheme as nearly as possible in their own words.

One says, I was encouraged to put my name on the probationers list, from seeing that there were at least five vacancies for every two ministers. I have travelled nearly three quarters under the direction of the Home Mission Committee. During that time I have been sent to fifteen appointments for two Sabbaths each. To one for one Sabbath. Of those congregations six had called ministers. In four Gaelic was indispensable, and as I do not know that language there was no chance for settlement in any of those places. Seven were unprepared. They said they wanted Student's work then up. One was undecided. Only one reported itself prepared. The elders promised when I left them to take steps to get up a call, but as their Presbytery was not to meet for two months, leave could not be obtained to moderate in a call without a special meeting of Presbytery. I presume the affair has fallen through, as I have heard no more of it. Another says, I was sent to ten appointments. Three had called ministers. Five were Mission Stations, and unprepared to call ministers. Two were prepared. From one of them I have received and accepted a call. One minister who is conceded to have talents rather over than under mediocrity travelled nearly two years before he got a call. Several after travelling two years had their names erased from the list as according to a law of the Church, a minister who does not receive a call in his time is set aside. He retains his ministerial character only in name. He is irretrievably deposited from the ministry. Several ministers who have been settled over congregations for years and have held honorable, influential positions in the Church, have been thus driven out of the ministry and have been lost to the Church. According to the probationers list, published April first, 1872, there are only eighteen probationers, and fifty-two vacancies. Did this truly represent the proportion of vacancies and ministers available to fill them, there would nearly be three vacancies to each man. Why then should a small, weak congregation, dependant on the Home Mission Fund for a part of what will make up a minimum salary, consequently entitled to less than one-third of an average minister, have half a dozen ministers sent to them and be deluded into the opinion that they can get any one of them they may see fit to choose. Many such congregations after giving two or three calls and having them declined, become discouraged and give up in despair. A member of a congregation in the situation described above very aptly compared their condition to that of guests at a certain hotel when a fine bill of fare was spread and each one was asked to choose his dish, but it was invariably found that nothing could be had but porridge. He said, you ask us to choose, but we find out at last we have only the porridge. If men have only porridge they may as well know it at once. But if the probationers represented the case truly, only one third of the vacancies could get even porridge. I will now show that this list does not give the case correctly. First, The number of vacancies is too great. In one Presbytery in which four vacancies are reported, the convener of the sub-committee for that Presbytery said the number should be two. Of these two only one was in a condition to call a minister. It has now got a minister settled. The remaining one was reported by the Moderator of Session as being unprepared to call a minister, and he added that there was no prospect of their being able under the present system. I cannot say how far this Presbytery represents the state of the whole Church. Again, there are a number of ministers, probably ten or twelve, who refuse to put their names on the probationers list to be kicked round as some of the ministers who understand its working facetiously call it. They go to all the desirable vacancies, avoiding all those congregations who have called ministers and those who are unprepared to call. There are again a number of ministers who desire to change. They hold on to their congregations and go round as candidates to all the desirable vacancies.

If by the term probationer is meant, as some explain it, a minister who is a candidate for a charge, those are the real probationers. Those who have their name on the list seldom get the opportunity of being probationers. One of the regular probationers was kept idle a Sabbath not long ago and lost his days pay, while one of those settled ministers preached as a candidate in the pulpit to which he was assigned. The minister got a call. The probationer had then an opportunity of preaching a Sabbath to help to till up the time till the induction should take place. Probationers are used to a considerable extent in that way. I am aware that there is a law of the Church against employing a minister whose name is not on the probationers list, but while the probationers scheme is worked as at present, there is little doubt but many ministers and congregations will continue as heretofore to disregard it. It is this evasion of the law which causes the burden to fall so heavily on those who abide by the law. There is a law against a minister resigning his charge more than twice. But he may be translated from one charge to another as often as he pleases. If the permanency of the relation between pastors and congregations is the object aimed at, it might tend to promote this to require every minister who desires a charge to put his name on the probationers list and travel at least three months in that way. Few who had made trial of this scheme would be likely to resign their charges without good cause. The present law against resigning charges might be dispensed with. But if the scheme is unsatisfactory to ministers, it is equally so to congregations. A prominent Church member said lately that they had had so much difficulty in getting separated from their last minister when an unpleasantness arose that they would not venture to call another minister without hearing him often and knowing more of him than the probationer's scheme provides for. An Elder who takes a deep interest in Church matters lately, said—Two years ago we petitioned Presbytery to send us a probationer for a year, to see if the congregation could again be gathered together. And if successful a call might be given. The request was not granted. He added if we could have got a man sent to us then we might have had a good congregation now—but it is too late—they are all scattered and many gone to other denominations, and we can keep it up no longer. There was a prosperous Church in that place ten years ago, but though the place has grown, and property has doubled in value during the past year, owing to a new R. R. passing through the place the Church has gone down past recovery. When a probationer cannot be had for any lengthened period, what is looked upon as the next best thing by congregations is to secure a student for six months to see if he can be successful in gathering up the scattered members and getting them in a condition to have a minister settled. In many cases they prefer waiting till the student is through with his time and getting him then settled as pastor. Some perhaps, of the most satisfactory settlements in the Church have been brought about in that way. It is a sad comment on the working of a system that an apprentice should be required to put the machine in far working order before the finished workman can be got to take it in charge. What then is the remedy?

The Presbyteries of Montreal, Ottawa and Brockville have adopted a system which appears to work admirably wherever it has been tried. When congregations are found unable to agree on a minister or feel themselves too weak to support one, and more than three fourths of the vacancies at that condition, they appoint an ordained minister over them for six months or a year or two years with the opportunity of calling him and getting him inducted over them regularly. Any time during the term many of these temporary settlements have become permanent. Settlements have been effected in that way where there was not the slightest prospect by the present system. This system is nearly the same as that which the Methodists have found so effective in their whole work. If the General Assembly would adapt this system and recommend it over all the vacancies of the Church wherever it was desired, it would doubtless accomplish much good. Many congregations which now pay \$8 per sabbath and \$3 or \$4 per week for board and horse hire, making in all over \$600 per annum which is more than some settled pastors get. Without adding to their expense congregations could be under regular and efficient pastoral care. Many ministers who are spending all their time and money in travelling from one end of the

country to the other, preaching two Sabbaths in a place, could be doing regular pastoral work. They could be at home with their families and spend the money in providing for them, which now is spent in travelling. Those who are not experienced can have little idea of the expense and inconvenience attending this mode of life. A minister lately told me that all the money he received barely met his travelling expenses. His health was quite broken down by fatigue and exposure. He at length got a call to an important town congregation. He discharged his pastoral duties in a highly efficient manner, did a vast amount of writing besides and quite recruited his health. It may be necessary to keep up the probationers scheme yet, but let it be confined to those who are really probationers, i. e. those who are through with their studies but have not yet sustained their ordination trials. It will do such men good to make a tour of the Churches. And there may be enough of vacancies where they will prefer adhering to the present system to give them employment. But let ministers without charge be placed in charges. Temporarily at first if necessary, and if they prove successful as pastors, those pastoral relations will in time become permanent. W. C.

FRENCH EVANGELIZATION.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—Your New Brunswick correspondent in last week's issue tells of the signal success of two young missionaries among the French Roman Catholics of that province; and states that they have been sent there by the French Canadian Missionary Society. Allow me to correct this last statement, and to remind our Church of the distinctive work which she has undertaken in this connection. The young men in question are students of the Canada Presbyterian Church, and so were those sent to the Lower Provinces during the last three years. The French Missionary Society trains no colporters or missionaries, and does not send out or control the young men referred to. In May, 1869, the Presbytery of Montreal unanimously overruled a general Synod on French Evangelization; and in compliance with the prayer of said overture the Synod decided to train in connection with the Presbyterian College, Montreal, missionaries and ministers speaking French and English. To carry out this decision the Rev. D. Coussirat, B. D., an accomplished scholar and theologian, was placed on the staff of the College, and the Church was appealed to for the necessary funds. The undertaking at once found favor with our people, and only requires to be more fully understood in order to elicit in a still greater degree their prayers and liberality. There are at present eleven French students pursuing their studies; and the openings for their services are more numerous than can be overtaken. Communities in which French and English people are intermingled, look to our Church for supply of Gospel ordinances, and she possesses in the College at Montreal, the only institution in the Dominion with facilities for training such laborers as are required.

I cannot agree with your New Brunswick correspondent that it would be better for the friends of the Acedian mission to transfer the management of the work there to a central committee, or to the French Canadian Missionary Society. They should retain this in their own hands. Local interest and supervision are most requisite. They know better than any committee sitting at Montreal the peculiarities and wants of their own field. And as to getting missionaries or ministers, the French Canadian Mission has none to offer. It imports its own missionaries from Europe; but the brethren in the Maritime Provinces may reckon upon the Canada Presbyterian Church to aid, by the men she is training in the great work of overthrowing Popery there, and in all parts of the Dominion.

Let me only add that our Church having, in the manner just indicated initiated this great enterprise, should prosecute and extend it with energy. I believe that there are means and power enough in the Church, under God's blessing, to destroy the tyranny of Rome in our entire country. What we need is not a patch put upon our Church from without in any form, whether in delegating her work to a committee or otherwise, but a baptism of the Holy Ghost, the infusion of spiritual life. Contributions for French evangelization by our people, and by Bible classes and Sabbath schools, should be sent to Warden King, Esq., Montreal. Yours &c. A. M. G.