

Our Contributors.

A MAN LIKE YON.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Many years ago we spent a few days in a locality that had a short time before been visited by an able preacher from one of our Ontario cities. The city brother had preached two or three of his best sermons, and had made a good, and we hope, lasting impression. Among his most effusive admirers was an excellent elderly lady, who on every possible occasion exhausted her stock of adjectives in his praise, and wound up every panegyric by exclaiming,

"OH, IF WE HAD A MAN LIKE YON."

Before reaching this climax, she always asserted that the city man's congregation was very pious, that they lived and laboured for the Lord in the most loving way imaginable, and that nobody could attend that church without "getting good." Years afterwards, we knew that congregation well. It was neither better nor worse than a dozen others that could easily be named. If all the good people there loved each other fervently some of them took rather peculiar ways of showing their affection. Many no doubt "got good" by attending the services, and, as in all congregations, some became hardened. Somebody had given the good woman exaggerated facts, or she had drawn too freely on her imagination.

That good woman deserved credit for wishing that her congregation had a good pastor. Her heart was right, but her judgment was poor. The city brother was a good man and an eloquent preacher, but he would perhaps not have done as good work in that particular corner of the vineyard as the rural brother who had just left. The wish to have him may have been pious, but an ounce of sanctified common sense is worth more than a ton of senseless, pious wishes.

Yon man would not have come if he had been asked, and congregations rarely gain anything by calling men who don't come. Wishing for impossible things or impossible men is not a nourishing kind of exercise for either congregations or individuals.

Yon man could not have lived on the salary even if he had come. His salary at home was more than three times as large as the good woman's congregation could have paid and the coveted minister had hard enough work to get on with it.

Yon man might not have taken kindly to the position even if he had come. Looking back over the many years that have intervened, and knowing what we now know, we feel reasonably certain that though yon man made a powerful impression with two or three sermons, he never would have succeeded as pastor of the congregation. His physical and mental make-up were quite unsuitable.

The making of a preacher like yon man and the keeping of him at his best involve the possession of a good library. The city brother in question had an excellent library. A library, even a middling one, costs lots of money. There would have been little or no money for books in the rural parish, and the mind of yon man might have become dull and his sermons duller. A little more money judiciously spent on books would lengthen many a pastorate. But how can a minister spend money on books if he has no money to spend.

A preacher like yon man, kept at high-water mark in his pulpit work must travel. Had the city brother in question been translated to the rural parish, his longest trip would have been to the nearest General Assembly. The change would have had a father depressing effect upon the apparatus with which he made his sermons. He had been across the Atlantic several times, had been on the Continent, and had seen most, if not all the leading cities of the United States.

The sudden change to staying at home all the time and confining his view within the fence around his manse, might have reduced yon man's preaching power fifty per cent.

There is said to be a great deal of unrest in our Zion at the present time. So many pastors want a change and so many congregations are sighing for impossible yon-mans, that it is seriously proposed to introduce the Methodist itineracy in a modified form. Several years will no doubt pass, and many people will have to be consulted and perhaps several other remedies tried first. Meantime there are two things any congregation can do. The one is to get rid forever of the wretched rag of Popery, which leads even Presbyterians to think that the minister should do everything in and around the church except the grumbling. Fancy the absurdity of men shouting about the martyrs, and Covenanters, and Fathers denouncing priests and vociferating about Romish aggression, while they, in at least one particular, are Romanists at heart. The idea that the minister should do everything in the church is thoroughly Romanist. The Watchman scores well when it says that the tap-root of the craving for a minister who can "draw," is Romanist. Many people want a man who can draw so that they need do nothing themselves. That is a sad fact. The other thing that can be done to prevent the increase of unrest is to stop sighing for impossible yon-mans, and help the pastor we have by doing our own share of the work.

RESPECTING ELDERS.

BY W. H. M.

"Love pleads no excuse of impossibility."

In making practical suggestions as to what we might or rather what we ought to do, I proceed upon the assumption that we are ready to devote at least as much time to this business as councillors and aldermen, and other public-spirited men, devote to theirs; and to expend as much energy and earnest thought during that time as we severally do in the prosecution of our respective businesses or professions.

True, the profits are only ultimate perfection of character and eternal felicity, instead of a handsome brick house and the chief seat at the feast; and to us "practical men" these profits are too unsubstantial and visionary to enter into our calculations, or at least to weigh in the balance with the brick house and chief seat. Yet, strange to say, even the most eminently practical of us will in words acknowledge the power and authority of the Master, who demands our utmost endeavour, and who in return promises these heavenly riches. It will, then, be forgiven me if I assume this faith to be real; and if it be real, who dare say the tasks here suggested are too great?

It is also to be assumed that we can choose out of a church of, say three hundred families, at least twenty capable men, who have tact and Christian refinement, and whose time need not be wholly occupied with the struggle for subsistence or by other necessary cares. While I recognize the prior claims of family and business, there are many even among the poorer men whose occupations leave them much leisure. And I would ask those strong, shrewd men in the Presbyterian Church, who have amassed enough for their comfortable living, or even those who are prosperous beyond the ordinary necessities of life, when they claim that their business requires all their attention, to consider whether their duty lies in devoting all their energies to increasing their luxuries, or amassing still more money, that they may leave their families wealthy or endow charities; or whether they should not rather resist the opportunities of further money-making, and spend, for the love of Christ and man, at least the eleventh hour in the vineyard. Or must work there ever be left to the weaker

among us? Must ability, vigour, and ambition always be selfish? As it has been said, the present need is that men should practise self-denial in refusing to make money rather than in giving it away.

Then, as to what seem to me to be the duties of Eldership: In general terms, the Elder is bound to be both bishop and pastor of his district; that is the overseer and feeder, or, to use a comprehensive name, the deacon or ministering servant. And he is not merely the spiritual overseer; but his ministry extends to the bodies and souls of his flock. His district should be small. In the case of a church containing three hundred families, and having twenty elders, the Elder would have charge of fifteen families. Every member of these families he should know well, and, if possible, their history from childhood, that he may advise and act intelligently. And it should be his constant aim to make himself thoroughly acquainted with every non-church-going family and all uncared-for poor in his district. They should be considered a portion of his flock, of whom he will be required to render account at the coming Judgment: "The cause of him I knew not I searched out."

The Elder who reverences his office as of divine appointment, and assumes such large duties, will rapidly gain a status in the church and in his community that will enable him, not only to aid and advise to good purpose, but to exercise (with due tact) a certain gentle authority and supervision where such assumption is now generally regarded as officious. He will be treated as a sub-minister, having all the authority and dignity of a true minister in his district. Once the Elder is in earnest about his business, the difficulties of establishing intimate and sympathetic relations with from fifteen to twenty families will not be so great but that they can be overcome by ordinary men by the exercise of the same amount of tact, judgment and energy as they employ in their respective callings.

Let me now mention more specifically a few of his duties:—

1. He is a father to the needy.—It is the Elder's first duty to see that his flock (including the churchless and uncared-for in his district) are decently housed, clothed and fed; and for this purpose there should be a liberal church fund intrusted to him to administer. The distress he has to deal with may be caused by illness, lack of work, or such like involuntary misfortune; or to idleness, improvidence, drunkenness, or other misconduct. If caused by any of the former class of cases, there is a clear right to relief; and if we do not cheerfully and tenderly render such relief in a systematic manner, we not only violate our natural principles of humanity, but disobey the specific injunctions of our Master, whose false stewards we are. We tremble at the thunders of Mount Sinai, but we do not enough fear the thunders of Olivet. For this law of ministry was promulgated as solemnly by Jesus Christ as was the Sinaitic Law, and accompanied by threatenings as terrible. Either from Gerizim or from Ebal shall the voice proceed as we pass before the Son of Man, crying, "When saw we Thee?"

A large and important part of this branch of the Elder's work is to assist in obtaining employment for the able-bodied unemployed. The names and needs and qualifications of all such might be announced weekly from the pulpit, that all the brotherhood may know and assist. Such an announcement would sound much sweeter than the solo.

If the distress be caused by any one of the latter class of cases, there is the more need for the Elder's ministrations. Idleness, improvidence and drunkenness are "the world, the flesh, and the devil" that he is bound to battle with; and, like his Master, he came to save that which was lost. I think all merciful people, who are not eager to find ground for withholding their charity, will consider that present misery or need is sufficient claim to relief, however caused. But then

much more ought to be attempted. Now I am quite aware of, and I highly appreciate, the great deal that is done for the poor and unfortunate by individuals in the Church, by the Ladies' Aid Societies, Christian Endeavor Societies, and the Y. M. C. A., and other organizations. What I have been saying has no reference to them.

But we as a Church do not make this practical work our business. If anything is done, it is done by a branch society, or by individuals. There is no organization capable of dealing with the question. We do alms haphazard, and are doubtless often cheated. Nobody is responsible. Now, this ministry to the needy being set forth plainly as our first if not our chief duty, the whole body of the Church as a Church should devote itself to it. The Elders are our ministers and proper almoners; they are the proper presidents of the respective district "Relief Societies," and should be held responsible for any distress.

The women in the Church, who do so much now at great disadvantage, would find their work easier and more effective in the Elders' organization. A part of their work would be the establishment of sewing and cooking classes at the houses of the poor; and in this way the ladies would have many opportunities to teach and enforce the laws of cleanliness and order. Then what good the young ladies might do by instituting private Kindergarten schools, and so forth.

At the head of all this activity is, first as general director, the Minister, and under him as I have said, the district Minister, or Elder, who is responsible for his district; and the workers are all those who will work. All should be loyalty obedient to the Minister and Elder, as soldiers to officers.

I have recently become aware of a case of distress in our town, which shows what unknown suffering there may be, in the absence of any responsible organization—when there is no searching out. Near my home there lives, in a filthy and disorderly shanty, a family whose unfortunate condition has attracted the attention of the neighbours. The young wife and her baby were ill for some months. The baby died a few weeks ago, but the mother is now able to be about. The doctor states that the death of the baby was caused by lack of proper nourishment, and that the illness of the woman was increased and prolonged by the same cause. The husband, owing to asthma, cannot do heavy work, has been unable for several months to obtain anything to do of any consequence. The baby's funeral expenses were paid by the Salvation Army (to which the family do not belong). I do not think that any church was aware of this case until I informed the Anglican Rector (they professing to be Anglican), whose practical benevolence is well known.

The presence of a great deal of distress in our town is admitted by those who know the state of the poor; and in a large city it must be very great. As evidence of this I may mention that a few days ago a circular was left at my residence, headed

"APPEAL FOR CLOTHING

for general distribution to the Needy, without reference to Religion or Character," and signed by the Rector. This is an attempt to provide for the poor during the winter by storing a large quantity of clothing. The Rector is striving to do, not only his own work, but that of our Elders. His is the spirit of the grand old Elder, Job:—

"If I have seen any perish for lack of clothing,

Or that the poor had no covering,

Then let my shoulder fall from the shoulder-blade,
And mine arm be broken from the bone."

Fathers of our Church, Christ's Pastors, you are the feeders of His flock; this is your ministry. You dare not shift it. You should rather be jealous lest another take your glory.

In another letter I shall speak of the Elder as the leader in righteous living, and the minister of spiritual things.