

Our Contributors.

THE TARTAN AGAIN IN THE FRONT.

BY KNOXIAN.

English speaking men the world over now know that Ian MacLaren is the key. John MacLaren Watson, pastor of the Selton Square Presbyterian Church, Liverpool. Like Lord Byron Mr. Watson—perhaps we should say Doctor Watson now—woke up one morning to find himself famous. His fame arose from his book, "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush." For humour, pathos and general wholesomeness this book stands easily first among books of its kind; and the kind is good.

The only weak thing about Ian's charming volume is its title. "The Little Minister" is a suggestive and happy title; "The Sickit Minister" has a world of meaning in Scotland, but "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush" is altogether too light and sentimental a title for a book that has such characters as Marget Howe and Lachlan Campbell and Drumsheugh and Burnbrae and Weelum MacLure walking through its pages. Criticism, however, is disarmed the moment you get past the title page. You read, you laugh, you cry, you admire the noble and the good and inwardly resolve to be noble and good yourself. As you lay down the book you perhaps mentally repeat Tennyson's lines:—

How'er it be it seems to me
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets
And simple faith than Norman blood.

The first display of real power and pathos is the conversation between Georgie Howe and his mother when it became evident that Georgie's end was near. George was "a lad o' parts" and notwithstanding his poverty and poor health he had won the highest honours in college. His mother, like many another noble, Scotch mother would like to see him a minister, "if he's worthy o't, no otherwise." George was taken home and the manner in which his mother gave up her son is something that one cannot read about with dry eyes. There is no better woman than Marget Howe outside of the Bible.

Then comes the parting between Domsie, George's teacher and his favourite pupil. By the time you have read this far you are quite persuaded you are reading no ordinary book and this feeling grows upon you until you stand by the death bed of Dr. MacLure, and while Drumsheugh holds his hand, hear him ask for his mother's Bible and with his failing breath try to repeat the twenty-third psalm. When you have followed the Drumsheugh men as they carried MacLure's body through the deep snow drifts to his grave; and have listened to their conversation you feel profoundly grateful to Mr. Watson for having written this noble book and wonder if he can ever write another as good.

Lachlan Campbell is one of the most interesting characters you meet in Mr. Watson's stirring pages. Lachlan is interesting not because he is lovely but because he is typical. He was stern, severe, harsh, and went to church mainly to keep the minister and congregation right. Some of us have seen a few genuine Lachlan Campbells in Canada and carloads of spurious imitations. A real Lachlan Campbell is in many respects a good kind of a man but a pinchbeck imitation with all Lachlan's faults without his virtues, and his knowledge is a hard character to put up with. Lachlan used to look down upon the youthful Moderator of Session with "austere superiority" and when the Moderator and he understood each other they became the warmest of friends. Lachlan's special work in the session was to examine youthful applicants for tokens about their law work, and enquire how long they had been at Sinai, but when his own daughter Flora got

into trouble and the session and neighbours treated her kindly, Lachlan softened down and became a different kind of a man. His last speech was distinctly on the side of charity.

Jamie Soutar was the Cynic of the Glen. An ordinary cynic one that can do nothing but sneer and carp at other people while never accomplishing anything himself is about the meanest and most useless thing on this footstool. Jamie Soutar was not that kind of a cynic. When he attacked an English "veesitor" to the Glen he did so on substantial grounds. When he doubled up Hopps the pretentious "veesitor frae about England," he made it clear in the briefest space of time that the patronizing Southern windbag had never heard of the Act of Union that he had never read Adam Smith that he did not know the difference between Armenianism and Calvinism, and that he thought "the confession of Faith was invented in Edinburgh." A cynic who can do high class work of that kind may be a very useful kind of a citizen.

To our mind Burnbrae, next to Marget Howe, is the finest character Mr. Watson sketches. Some of our friends admire Dr. MacLure most, and he certainly is a grand character; but for all round goodness and usefulness we put Burnbrae first among the men. Drumsheugh is also a capital man. In fact all Mr. Watson's leading creations are splendid men and that is one reason why the book has such a wholesome influence.

SPECIALIZE THE ELDERSHIP.

BY N. A. O.

IN THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN of April 3rd an interesting article appears, under the caption "The Catechist and the Sacraments," that will claim wide attention throughout the church. It deals with a question of very great moment and one that is continually being discussed from one point of view or another, the supply of the home mission field, and raises an important issue. Your correspondent is in sympathy with the author of the article, Rev. James Fraser, of Cushing, Quebec, in proposing extraordinary means to cope with a difficult situation. As to the particular means proposed, however, and the arguments adduced in support of it, we differ somewhat. I trust the matter under consideration will receive the fullest discussion in your columns, that it may in due course be reduced to such a form as to justify its being brought before the Assembly. Although criticising the arguments brought forward by Mr. Fraser in support of his position, I do not write with the intention of being critical, but, like himself, in the hope of leading up to definite and effective legislation on the part of the Church.

The dispensing of the Sacraments by men ordained by the laying on of hands is not a matter of use and wont. Use and wont are always local, however widely local. Ordination is a matter of a different sort. It is not a mere convenience, nor is it something developed in the Church, it is something given to the Church, and is part and parcel of the belief and practise of the whole Church. To say then that "it is held by some that they (the sacraments) should not be administered except by one duly ordained to the ministry," is to begin to beg the question in favor of the dispensing of sacraments by catechists. The rites of the Church are better guarded then to be "held by some."

There are not two senses in which men are said to be ordained, as would seem to be stated in Mr. Fraser's article when he says, "In this sense the catechist who now preaches the gospel without ordination to the ministry has been ordained." This is begging the question again. Men are not ordained to superintend Sunday Schools. Our students are not ordained to preach in some mission field during the summer or the winter months, or our superintendents

of missions (already ordained men) to superintend the missions. To be ordained by the laying on of hands is to be ordained to the ministry, whether it be for the preaching of the gospel they are ordained, for the work of the elder, or to the office of deacon; and there is no other ordination presented in Scripture or practised by the Church.

To say (as is said in the above article) that certain examples cited from Scripture "clearly show that the meaning of ordination, in general, is appointment of men as proven as qualified, to office or special work in the Church, for an indefinite time or for a more definite season," is to beg the question doubly. In the first place there is no "meaning in general" attaching to ordination, acknowledged in the belief and practice of the Church or presented in Scripture, nor is there any "ordination in general," if that should be the meaning intended. Ordination is ordination, and it may not be said there is ordination and ordination. Every meaning that attaches to ordination is specific, whether it be the seal of qualification that is under consideration, the Church's work of authority, the public and official consecration of the applicant for the work of the ministry, the formal committing of the word and doctrine, or the perpetuating of the Christian ministry. In the second place there is a begging of the question when mention is made of "appointment . . . to office or special work in the Church," inasmuch as the office (or offices) of the ministry and "special work" do not fall in the same category. Moreover, the begging of the question in this instance is continued when that appointment is spoken of as "for an indefinite time or for a more definite season." Paul and Barnabas were without doubt sent upon a particular mission (Acts xiii.), but their ordination cannot be said to have been for a definite season. It would not be correct either to speak of it as being for an indefinite time, for a time limit is not considered in ordination.

Ordination is essential to the Christian ministry for reasons with respect to which the Church is at one, reasons already suggested, and which do not need to be dwelt upon in detail here. In recognition of this fact, the deacon is ordained to his office by the laying on of hands, and should he afterward be elected to the office of the elder he is ordained to that office in the same way—not re-ordained, but ordained to another office of the ministry. Should the same man afterward be ordained to the ministry of the word his ordination is one and the same, only to a higher office. In each case he is ordained according to the Scripture.

The question raised by Mr. Fraser: "May the Church, through its organized governmental institutions, employ catechists to minister the sacraments, without ordination to the ministry?" is an important one, both because of the object in view, and on account of the question itself intrinsically. Your correspondent would submit that, in view of the facts reviewed in the foregoing part of this communication, the question of anyone dispensing the Sacraments who has not been ordained is satisfactorily settled in the negative. Leave off these latter words, "without ordination to the ministry," however, and we have a subject worthy of the most careful consideration of Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly of our Church. It is a subject too that would not be completely novel to the Church, though dealing with a matter new and unaccustomed to ourselves.

In all things essential to church polity the practice of the apostolic church as recorded in the New Testament is our sufficient guide. The apostles ordained elders in every city and place where they founded the church. These elders they left in charge in their absence—and their absence was sometimes of long continuance. They do not appear to have found it necessary to ordain deacons except as the progress of the

infant church required. There was a stated ministry of the Word as yet, other than the apostles themselves. Did the ordained elders thus left in sole charge, dispense the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper? We submit that the nature of the case would demand that they should do so. Certain passages in the Acts show the Apostles go to show that they did dispense the Lord's Supper. After Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost the three thousand converts, with the other brethren, "continued steadfastly in the apostolic doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts ii. 42). Peter was present and the other apostles, but their presence is not emphasized when mention is made of the steadfast continuance. In Acts xx. it is shown that the disciples at Troas came together to break bread upon the first day of the week, the day upon which believers were accustomed to meet for worship. Paul was there, and his preaching and miracle signalized the occasion, but, though he celebrated the Lord's Supper, being present, his presence would not appear to have been considered essential to a celebration. He was in Troas but several days, and therefore was present on one occasion of the disciples coming together "upon the first day of the week . . . to break bread." If, then, we can agree with the apostles that the elders were competent to "take heed to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made you overseers, to feed the Church of God" (Acts xx. 28), we cannot deny the elders now the authority to dispense the sacraments when the needs of the Church correspond with those of the early Church, and therefore demand the sacraments if we have understood the passages and the circumstances aright, and particularly the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. If this position be well taken, and we believe it is, let us meet the exigencies of the time in the conduct of missions, by specializing the eldership. It is the practise of our Church to ordain elders in every congregation for that particular congregation. Why not give to Catechists the status of elders? and to students also, who have entered upon the study of theology with a view to the work of the ministry, and who, meanwhile, are engaged in mission work, *sine titulo*? This would be specializing the eldership in that ordination is conferred "without relation or probable view had to a particular charge," as the term *sine titulo* is defined in Moore's Digest, p. 413. Having taken this step, why not specialize the eldership further, by giving these men authority to dispense the sacraments also? In view of the present practice of the Church, this looks like specialization, but we believe it would only be recognizing the authority inherent in the office of the elder under circumstances such as we have considered, and such as prevail largely in the Canadian Church to-day.

There is another solution of the difficulty contemplated, the supply of capable men authorized to dispense the sacraments in mission fields. It is that adopted by the North Presbyterian Church in the United States, and found, we believe, entirely workable and satisfactory. The ruling and practice of this great church upon the question of "ordination as an evangelist to labor in feeble churches," is thus presented in Moore's Digest (1886, p. 412, ch. xv. § 1).—"Is it or is it not in accordance with the principles of the Presbyterian Church to ordain evangelists to labor in fields having feeble churches which are not able to support a pastor, and are too remote conveniently to secure the services of an ordained minister." The answer is given on the same page: "To ordain evangelists under the specified circumstances is in accordance with the practise of the Church, and is no infraction of any of its laws." This is the legislation of the Northern Presbyterian Church in force since 1850.

Ordination "does not impress a char-