

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Letters to a Young Preacher.

LETTER XXII. CHURCH DISCIPLINE: PERSONAL OFFENCES.

My Dear Brother,—

It may seem incongruous to address you upon this subject, since the exercise of Discipline is regarded by us as belonging to the churches.—Undoubtedly it is theirs to receive members, to deal with the unruly, to exclude transgressors, and to restore the penitent. (Rom. xiv. 1. xv. 7. 1 Thes. v. 14. 1 Cor. v. 12, 13. 2 Thes. iii. 5. 2 Cor. ii. 6—8.) In many cases, however, the brethren need instruction with regard to this duty; and for it they naturally look to their pastor. It is, therefore, highly requisite that he shall thoroughly understand this subject, in order that he may be prepared to impart sound and judicious instruction upon it. Instances have often occurred in which churches have been thrown into confusion and strife, to their lasting injury, through the ignorance and inexperience of pastors, who have recommended, or at least countenanced, unscriptural and imprudent measures. On the other hand, the wise counsels of ministers possessing knowledge and experience in these matters, have frequently prevented the occurrence of such evils, or have greatly aided in the removal of them. It is obvious, then, that one of the first duties devolving on a young man who is taking a pastoral charge, is to make himself thoroughly acquainted with Church Discipline.

The law of Christ respecting personal offences is too plain to be misunderstood: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican." Mat. xviii. 15—17. That the party who feels himself aggrieved should go in a spirit of love, and sincerely endeavor to "gain his brother," and to this end seek a favorable opportunity, when the other is not likely to be under excitement, is obvious; as also that in the event of having to call aid, he ought to take "two," if it be in his power, and that these should be prudent and impartial brethren. If these "witnesses" testify to the Church that the complainant has labored faithfully to effect a reconciliation, but that the accused has given offence, and refused to make amends, the church must judge between them; and if the aggressor decline to give such satisfaction as is considered due, he must be excluded, and so be regarded "as a heathen."

Plain, however, as is this divine law, and strongly as its manifest excellency must commend it to every rightly disposed mind, it is nevertheless a notorious and lamentable fact, that many professed disciples of Jesus are exceedingly reluctant to obey it. An individual takes offence, very probably without any sufficient reason, and is determined to have the matter brought at once before the Church, without taking the preliminary steps enjoined by the King of Zion, or either of them. It often requires great firmness and decision on the part of the pastor to prevent the adoption of this unscriptural and pernicious course. If it be permitted, one or both of the parties are almost sure to come before the Church under the influence of a bad spirit; unkind words are uttered, and these draw forth more. Some persons take up on one side, and some on the other. A scene of discord ensues; and the consequences of the whole procedure are disastrous indeed.

Where the pastor rightly understands this part of discipline, and duly instructs the people in it, so that every complainant is invariably obliged to employ the two prior measures before the case can be brought into the church, these very serious evils are prevented. Probably in nine cases out of ten the disagreement is adjusted, either at the first or second private interview.—In any one wherein it is ultimately found necessary to "tell it to the church," the brethren who assisted in attempting to effect a reconciliation, will be prepared to make a candid and mild statement of the matter; and no dissention will be likely to arise.

If an individual conceive his character has been publicly assailed, he may allege, that a private acknowledgment does not remedy the evil. In such a case, however, the matter should be

adjusted in private; but the acknowledgment, or correction, be made in public.

Persons who deemed themselves aggrieved in some cases think that it belongs to the other party to come to them. It is true, indeed, that he who knows a brother has ought against him, should immediately seek to be reconciled; (Matt. v. 23, 24.) but the express rule of gospel discipline makes it imperative on the offended party to "go to" the other.

Others may attempt to excuse themselves from the discharge of this duty, by alleging that it will be of no use, that the offender is unreasonable, may make a false statement respecting what is said in their private interview, &c. &c.—These frivolous excuses, however, must not be regarded. The pastor should understand his duty to "teach" the disciples "to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded;" (Matt. xxviii. 20.) and should firmly insist on the strict observance of His command—as binding as any given by Him—with reference to discipline in cases of personal offence. This unwavering adherence to duty will be of incalculable benefit.

With regard to differences about financial matters, a pastor should instruct the church-members to adhere precisely to the apostolic direction, which forbids them to "go to law one with another," and requires them to refer these matters to such brethren as are "wise" and "able to judge." (1 Cor. vi. 1—7.)

While it is his duty, as it is likewise that of every member, to act the part of a "peacemaker," he has need to be very careful to avoid all appearance of becoming a party in any contention. His teaching and his example should invariably be pacific, and adapted to promote peace.

May you, my dear young Brother, be expert in this matter, and be successful in preventing the occurrence of personal offences, and in the healing of any that may unhappily arise!

Yours in gospel bonds,

CHARLES TUPPER.

Aylesford, Nov. 13th, 1861.

ERRATA.—In Letter xx. C. M., Nov. 6th, page 357, paragraph 3rd, for "to able," read "to be able"; for "shall cultivate," read "should cultivate." Par. 6th, for "vacation," read "vocation."

For the Christian Messenger.

Mission in Shelburne County.

MR. EDITOR,—

I wish through the Messenger to give a short account of my labours in the employment of the Missionary Board of the Western Baptist Association.

I left home, October 1, 1861, and preached at the following places, Sable River, Lewis Head, Rockland Bay, Jordan River, Sandy Point, and Jordan Bay, in all eight weeks as assigned me by the Missionary Board. I travelled 223 miles; preached 35 times; visited 46 different families; attended 4 Conference Meetings; other meetings 2; and collected £7 13s. 4d. in behalf of the Mission.

This is a large and important field of labour. There are four small Baptist Churches in that district without any Baptist preaching, except that received through the Missionary Board.—I was kindly treated by the people, and although there were no additions to the churches, yet there appeared to be a growing interest in the congregations. Many came out to hear the Word, and I trust not in vain. The people of God were encouraged to more diligence and greater activity in the cause of Christ. May the Lord bless all the people in those regions so that all the means used may be made powerful for good.

JOHN F. MCKENNE.

Greenfield, November 28th, 1861.

For the Christian Messenger

The French Mission. Sister Normandy.

DEAR BROTHER,—

Having lately had the privilege of spending a day or two at the Mission house at Tusket, and of making the acquaintance of our worthy Missionary's family, I am under the impression that it will be for the honor of the Divine Master, and promote the growing interest of our Churches in that mission, to give a few sketches, traveller like, of what I saw and heard. Our brother's wife is a plain, unassuming, little woman, moving quietly about her house, attending to her domestic affairs, having her children in subjection with all gravity, and prepared to show hospitality without seeming to be disconcerted, making no apologies, and no complaints. I think there are about half-a-dozen children—two

boys, who I trust, may have the opportunity one of these days of attending the Academy at Wolfville, and four girls, one already old enough to attend—and far enough advanced in the French department at least, to do as well as get good, in Miss Shaw's classes. An effort should be made to raise a few pounds extra for that mission, to enable its friends to prepare *Mademoiselle Normandy*, to be a missionary among the Acadians.

Sister Normandy's religious history, interested me much. It was quite an "old fashioned experience," and illustrated in a striking manner the way in which the blind are often led "by a way which they know not," into light, life and liberty. To me, as she related it, it had all the interest of a romance, simply considered as a story. And as exhibiting the workings of that Spirit whose work true conversion is, it stirred my soul, as the souls of higher intelligences are stirred, over one sinner that repenteth.

Our sister was born and trained a papist.—Her father and mother had emigrated to Canada, not from this Province, but from France.—Her father was one of eighteen brothers, all of whom arrived to years of manhood. She was not taught to read in her childhood, but was early initiated into the dogmas of the Romish faith, and prepared to make her "confession premiere." Having at this important era travelled three miles and back for several days in succession, to see the confessor, she came home with a light heart when she learned that her toils were nearly over, and that she was to commune on the following day. Her mother participated in her joy, but her father looked grave, and put such questions to her on the nature and solemnity of the ordinance, and the consequences of partaking of it unworthily, as terrified her, and made her determine not to partake. Her mother and the priest united their persuasions and arguments; her father gave his consent; all the other little girls were going, and it was hard not to be in the fashion; but her father's solemn questions about the state of her heart, and her fitness to appear in the presence of her Judge, had made too deep an impression to be removed by the persuasions of either comrades, priest or mother, and as no force was used, she allowed several years more to pass before she permitted the consecrated wafer to pass her lips.

She was at that time residing in the United States, whither she had removed with her parents at the age of seven years. An older sister had been allowed to spend some time with a Protestant family not far off, where she had learned to speak English, and where she had imbibed religious notions, which, when discovered by her parents, caused her to be brought home, with a prohibition against returning to so dangerous a place. "I have been to the protestant meetings," she had told her sisters privately.—"I have enjoyed myself greatly, and I love to go." When her parents learned this, and forbade her going any more, she coolly replied, that she would obey. But from that day she faded away and at length died. She seemed to be in no pain; to be tranquil and happy; but she lost her appetite, and her strength, grew weaker and weaker in spite of all the kindness and care bestowed upon her. She said but little, either respecting the state of her health or mind. But she sang sweet hymns and tunes continually, and often was her countenance irradiated with a smile as she sang, and her eyes would be suffused with tears.

A Protestant doctor and christian resided near. She asked to be permitted to visit him and was allowed. At the good doctor's request she was allowed to spend a few days at his house. On one occasion afterwards when confined to her room, the doctor called, and while he prescribed nothing, he spent some time near her couch, conversing with his patient in English, but on what subject no one of the family knew, as none besides these two understood that language. But the Doctor retired deeply affected and 'twere not difficult to divine upon what subject a pious physician would be most likely to converse with such a patient under such circumstances.

When the last hour of this sister arrived, her younger sister (Mrs. N.) was alone present to hear her dying words. And she addressed her in a manner which could never be forgotten.—Her parents, as is usual in such cases, had deemed her partially insane. But now she told her sister, who had been watching alone by the couch during the long night, "I am not, and I have not been crazy. But I have been happy in my Saviour. The hour of my deliverance has come. I am going to be with him forever, and do you my dear sister remember what I say." She was asked if she desired the presence of the priest. She answer, "no," and she added that Christ was her Priest, her Saviour, her all. Her

parents and the other members of the family were summoned, but ere they came, her voice had failed, and in a few moments the happy spirit took its flight.

Sister Normandy dates her first permanent awakenings to the dying admonitions, connected with the meek and lowly life, and peaceful death of this sister. She was sure she could not die thus. Her sister must have had something of which she herself knew nothing. Meanwhile time passed. She had become a wife and mother, and was a diligent attendant on the rites and ceremonies of the Church. Of the Protestants she knew almost nothing, and of the Bible nothing at all. She was told that the Protestants were a bad set, and opposers of all that was good—that in their so-called religious meetings they abused the Church, rated against the virgin Mary, and levelled their deadliest hate against the Apostles. At length, in a very singular way, she was led to listen to a chapter in the New Testament. It was Revelation xii, the first she ever heard, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns." Her mother-in-law had come to visit her, and had given her a wonderful account of a wonderful book called the Bible, some of the wonders of which she narrated. The old lady could not herself read, but it seemed as if she could remember everything. Curiosity was awakened, and either to gratify the old lady, or to hear for herself, they repaired to the house of a mutual friend, who had a New Testament, and who could read. He was requested to read the above mentioned chapter, and did so. Mrs. Normandy the elder, made her comments upon it. She told them that the beast was the Pope, and the mark made in the foreheads of his worshippers, was the christening and the chrism. The reader was not very well pleased, nor was the younger visitor, at this exposition. But the word had taken "deep root." Nothing was said of it, not even to her husband for a long time.—Nor was he questioned as to what his mother might have said to him on the subject that had seemed so much to have engrossed her mind.—But after the lapse of about a year, her baby sickened, and she feared it would die. It had not been christened; the priest was a long distance off, and she was alarmed for the safety of its soul. But that singular story about the beast with so many heads and horns, and that comment of her mother-in-law about the mark in the forehead, occurred to her with great force; and she hurried out to enquire of her husband "If his mother had said anything to him about religion, when he saw her last." "She spoke of nothing else," was the rather gruff reply. "Did she tell you anything about that beast?" "Yes, she told me all about it." "Did she say anything about christening the babies?" "She did; she said it was all nonsense." Learning that her mother-in-law was still of the same mind as when she had seen her a year before, she concluded that there might be something in it, and so made herself easy about her baby's soul, and gave her care to its body; and it recovered.

Meanwhile the Lord carried on his work, but in a most mysterious manner. Her mother-in-law had abandoned her new views and queries, and gone back to the bosom of the Church.—But the doubts and objections she had been the means of raising, were not so readily allayed.—Her husband had lost all confidence in the Church and its teachers. Her son, now our Missionary, then a staunch Romanist, was sent for to aid in reclaiming his father. But he retired from the unequal task foiled, and trembling for the ark, the church of his fathers. He was soon an out and out Protestant. The announcement filled his wife with dismay, but from the first she resolved not to oppose him directly, but to use what influence love and gentleness could command, to lead him back to the paths of truth and uprightness. He erected the family altar immediately after he had found the Saviour, and asked her to pray with him. This she declined, but promised not to hinder him, and to kneel while he was praying. She did, but took pains not to listen. Sometimes she succeeded in this, but ever and anon some striking expression, or some warm gush of earnestness from her husband's heart, would arrest her attention and impress her own heart.

A fearful incident deepened the anxiety she felt at this time, but was striving to conceal from herself and from others, respecting her spiritual state. She came near being killed by a rail-car. It was a calm Sabbath evening, she had used all her address that morning to prevent her husband from going to meeting that day, and had succeeded. First she had persuaded him to take a short walk with her and the children—then to go in to his father's, where they had spent the evening pleasantly, and were on their way home.