

at Tivoli, Albans, Velletri and Civita Vecchia. Baptist churches have been organized in the following cities: Rome, 60 members; Bari, on the Adriatic, 75 members; Civita Vecchia, 20 members; Bologna, 60 members; Modena, 20; and finally, La Tour, in the Waldensian Valleys, 34 baptized believers. An attempt is now being made at Leghorn to form a New Testament church. We earnestly beseech our brethren of America to pray for us "that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak of the mystery of Christ," and especially for me, "that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak." (Col. 4: 3, 4) "All our state shall Tychicus (Bro. Dickerson, of South Boston) declare unto you, who is a beloved brother and a faithful minister in the Lord" (Col. 4: 7.) We much enjoyed that good brother's visit when he was here last summer, and are glad to learn that he has safely reached his sphere of labor. May God bless him. Extensive preparations are being made to celebrate the approaching opening of the Italian Parliament in this city. And surely no event could be more interesting to Italians than the first meeting of their Parliament within the walls of the Eternal city. On the 27th inst. the king of Italy will be proclaimed king of Rome, and Rome capital of Italy! To see this abandoned and crestfallen city, where all the events of the world before the Christian era had been transacted, where had lived those mighty men who had made the Consulate of Rome the protector of the peaceful and "the terror of the evil door," to see her again sitting on her seven hills and holding in her hands the sceptre of an empire which proclaims to all who tread her soil the righteous doctrine that freedom without its follies and liberty without license is man's heritage, appears a dream, and yet it is a reality! God bless Italy and her noble king!

The hard words bestowed by the clerical party on the partisans of the new regime appear to have disposed some of these to make large concessions in the vain hope of conciliating their censurers. The *Opinione* has been, since its arrival in Rome, so stung by the remark that the churches are deserted now that the Italian government has established itself in this city, that it takes pains to vindicate the zeal of the new comers, and to insinuate that they are quite a god-send to the celebrating priests, who would otherwise often officiate in empty churches. Another paper, the *Nazione*, hardly knows what to make of the *Opinione's* unusual interest in the subject of masses, and casts doubt on its motives. Whatever these may be, the *Florentine Journal* has some very sensible remarks on the affectation of piety for political purposes. It says:

"Such hypocrisy is as useless as it is base. Since the violence and perhaps the unfortunate disposition of the Italians stifled the genius of the Reformation, this hypocrisy has been one of the principal vices of our country and one of the main causes of our social and moral miseries. It had been the hope of those who love their country that the divine air of liberty would produce among us one of its best results—that of disposing men openly to confess their opinions without fanaticism and without fear. . . . Instead of seeing their hopes realized, one of the worst hypocrisies, religious hypocrisy, is becoming the foundation, the corner-stone of our policy. It is not enough to avoid offending the Pope; it is not enough to have given him enormous privileges, which in a thousand ways injure the functions of the State; but the watch word sent by the national government, the Liberal government, from Rome to Italy, through its journals is, 'Italians, go to mass!'"

Rather outspoken, is it not? If this dark picture be according to the truth, then let us give the Gospel to Italy, and she will enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

Yours very truly,

W. N. COTE.

P. S. My address is care of Messrs. Magnan & Hooker, Piazza de Spagna.

The Christian Messenger.

Halifax, N. S., Jan. 10, 1872.

THE DUTIES OF DEACONS.

It is very plain that the offices of the Christian Church recognized in the New Testament are Bishops and Deacons. Although other names as ministers, elders, evangelists, pastors, teachers, &c., are mentioned, yet the regular and permanent officers of the churches are regarded as embraced in the two terms: Bishops, or pastors, or elders, and deacons.

As men commonly wish to be relieved from obligation, the office of deacon comes in for a large share of duties, sought to be put upon them, on

one hand by their fellow-members and on the other by the minister. This circumstance renders it often a question of interest what properly belongs to the office. The characteristics required in deacons, and the duties devolving upon them, generally, may be learned from the apostolic writings. The principles of church order are given in the New Testament; but the details under the existing state of affairs are not so easily decided upon.

Attempts have sometimes been made to define the duties of Deacons, and adapt them to the arrangements of the present day, yet these definitions are often largely affected by the complexion of the speaker or writer's own mind. The common category of duties and explanation of the term "serve tables" in Acts vi 2, is, to look after and provide for the Lord's table, the minister's table and the table of the poor. This is plainly a pretty extensive combination, and, as if that were not enough, it has often come to pass that no department of labor could be thought of which was not required of him who happened to be elected to that office by his brethren. Whilst other members of churches, who choose to style themselves private members, may neglect all sorts of christian work and be held comparatively blameless, the unfortunate deacons are charged with every failure of coming up to the standard raised by their constituents, whether what was required of them were within the compass of their ability or not.

We often see essays and articles about deacons' duties, in which the writers, if they do not themselves happen to hold the office, indulge in putting upon it all possible and impossible service, and instead of shewing what is required of members towards those who are called to such service, and so assisting them, make the office one that it is scarcely possible for mortal man to fill.

We cannot say with one of our contemporaries "that we have seen but few gospel deacons"; for we have been privileged with the acquaintance of many of the excellent of the earth who have held that office, and who oftentimes, whilst ministers have failed to exercise a beneficial influence, have held on their way, and so prevented serious evils which threatened the churches. We have no hesitation in affirming that, as a class the Deacons of Baptist Churches are amongst the most devoted and useful men in the community, and that with some exceptions, they prove the wisdom and propriety of the choice made by the churches.

We of course are fully aware that the deacons are not exempt by their office from the performance of any christian duty. It no less belongs to them than to other brethren to attend to all matters affecting public worship, from that of being themselves present, and having the place of worship properly cleaned, lighted, and warmed, to that of filling up all the time, and preventing unprofitable pauses in the prayer-meetings. And so of visiting the sick and distressed, exhorting and admonishing the brethren, helping in the Sabbath School and encouraging generally all benevolent enterprises. These privileges belong to every christian man and woman as well as to the deacons, and are often better performed by non-officials. Much injury is frequently done to churches and church members by putting duties on officers of the church which do not properly belong to them. We should be glad to remove the idea that any of the ordinary services of christian brotherhood were in any measure specially dependent on the church officers. The zeal and energy of the members are repressed, and much warm-hearted devotion of the younger ones is lost by the notion that the facilities of doing good are limited to the more advanced. Besides too it very commonly happens that the deacons have to provide for their own tables, care for their own families, and perform their share of duties as citizens, and it is very clear that they have no more the power of ubiquity than other people; so that whilst called on to provide things honest in the sight of all men, they may be unable in such cases to do as much as many other Christians in what belongs to all the followers of Christ alike.

We have been led to these remarks by reading some articles on the subject by Rev. Dr. Fyfe in the *Canadian Baptist*. From the writer's standpoint they may be regarded as good, but if the Dr. had had a little more personal experience in the office he might have rendered his instruction more practical and valuable.

A few extracts from these papers may be acceptable, and we hope profitable to many of our readers; although we do not entirely concur in all he says. In considering the deacon's duty to the pastor, Dr. F. says:—"Pastors' salaries should be adequate to their comfortable support, and it is clearly the deacon's duty to see to this. All things were for a short time held in common with the early Christians, and the deacons were first appointed to see that there was a fair distribution of the common store among those who required it. A fair distribution of the common property of most of our churches would give the pastors a very much larger income than they get now. The law laid down by the Lord himself—the law which he "ordained"—is that the pastors "should live of the gospel," and those who rule well, as the apostle tell us, should be counted worthy of double honor, or "double reward," as the passage means. The want of an adequate support for the pastor is one of our real difficulties in Canada. Many have not considered the fact that the price of living has gone up from forty to fifty per cent. during the last ten or twelve years. This fact bears hardly upon all who live on salaries." "When the increased cost of living is not considered by the church, the minister and his family suffer, and they are obliged to leave or starve. We may raise up and educate as many ministers as we please; but our churches will never be able to keep them unless they resolve to give them an adequate support."

"But it may be asked, 'What is an adequate support?' I answer, not merely enough to procure food and raiment. No people wish to see their pastor suffer for want of the necessaries of life, nor do they wish him to appear shabby or 'seedy'; and if they would not be confronted with one of these unpleasant sights, they must give him enough to feed and clothe him and his family. But this is not all. He must have the means of getting books for his library."

"Having ascertained how much is required for a generous and brotherly support to the man who is devoting his life to their highest welfare, the next question is, How can we raise this money? The deacons know all the members of the church, what they can do and what they will do, and the whole matter of raising this money to the best advantage, so as to do most spiritual good to the membership, should be thought out also by the deacons. I do not propose to speak of the 'weekly offering' or any other system at present. I will simply remark that whatever system of collecting you may adopt, do not expect that any one will be efficient without a good deal of care and trouble on your part. I fear discipline should be used with some church members who are really idolaters; but of this I shall not speak at present. I contend, then, that deacons, should intelligently and generously examine this whole subject of pastoral support, and set themselves vigorously to provide for it. In no one way could they do more to promote the permanency of the pastorate, to enlarge the ideas of the church members, and promote the growth of the body. A stony people cannot grow, and ought not to grow."

In the last paper Dr. F. remarks:—

It is not necessary to comment at any great length on the service required at the Lord's table. This is simple and readily apprehended. I shall therefore pause to notice what is implied in serving "the table of the poor." The many seem to suppose that the poor members of a particular church only are meant. But surely this is too limited a view. The duty of ministering to the poor of their own church is indeed laid upon the deacons, but is this all that is assigned to them in respect to the poor? Is not the whole matter of church benevolence put under the deacons? Let us consider this question a little. When the first deacons were appointed, the chief duty assigned to them was to see that the contributions of the church were distributed to all who were in need.

I propose to notice briefly the twofold aspect of deacons' duties suggested by the foregoing remarks.

To minister to the wants of the poor members of their own churches. Is not this sacred duty too much overlooked by our deacons? I contend that the duties of the second class officers in the Christian Church, extend much beyond the poor of their own particular church. They are connected with the whole matter of church benevo-

lence. Benevolence has primary reference to the poor everywhere.

It seems clear to me that it was intended the deacons should oversee this matter. I am not contending that they should themselves go round and canvass every member of the church for contributions to aid in preaching the gospel to the poor, but is it not the deacon's duty to see that this is done? If not, who is to see to it? What provisions have been made in the Word of God for doing this work? Is it said, each member should bring his own contributions to the proper officer in the church? This may be granted for argument's sake. So each one should be "perfect," but he is not; and then what is to be done? Are we to leave them to themselves, or to go round and help them; by our sympathy, by our words and by our example, to do better? What think you is the Christian law in regard to this? I come back to the point, that the deacons are the only officers who can properly take the oversight of the financial affairs of the church, both in regard to home expenditure and in regard to church benevolence. I say not that they are to legislate, or to control the affairs of the church, but to give counsel to the church in respect to financial plans, and to carry these plans into effect, when they have been adopted by the church. In order to do this, the deacons should meet and think out thoroughly—with the counsel of the pastor,—this whole subject of church finance. This may present itself before such a meeting in two aspects. First, what the church is able to do, and therefore what it ought to do, for every church as well as individual should do all that it can for the cause of God. But this high standard may not be attainable at present.

The next question is what the church can be induced, by the use of proper means to do for the various objects of Christian benevolence supported by the denomination? Let this matter be thoroughly considered. Then see to it that "the proper means" are adopted to raise all that can be raised without irritating or offending the membership. I think this of great importance. I do not suppose indeed that we can avoid offending some one when going out to collect money, but I think much less offence may be given than is done in carrying out this work. When a brother is irritated—alas that so many should be so easily irritated when asked for money!—we lose our power to benefit him. His gift leaves no blessing resting on his own spirit, and the small rill of his benevolence will be like the summer brook, it will dry up in the heat. Then see to it, that the right parties are sent out to do the canvassing. I say canvassing, for very little will be raised without a personal application to each member. If I shall have aided any of you to render more efficient service to the Master, I shall deem myself well paid for writing as I have.

We offer no apology for placing the following note from our brother, J. R. Stubbert before our readers. Mr. S. is taking a course of study at Newton before entering upon his life work. Other Nova Scotian young brethren are there whom with him we hope soon to welcome back, and see at work in some of our promising fields at present destitute of ministerial labor:—

NEWTON THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE, Dec. 19th, 1871.

Dear Brother,—

We are always glad to see the *Christian Messenger* placed upon our table. It bears tidings of the Redeemer's kingdom, in our own dear native land. Rejoiced to see in its columns that some of the churches in the Province are enjoying the reviving influences of God's Holy Spirit; and trust the good work will advance until every church in the land will receive from on high "showers of blessings." Many of the churches in the Province are without Pastors to guide them, and I hope they will make every effort in their power to obtain the services of our dear brethren here who will graduate from this Institute in June 1872. Some of the churches here are destitute as well as our own, and they now are sending in invitations to the members of the Senior Class to go and settle with them. Of course, if our brethren do not receive a call from some of our own churches they will settle here and our own Province will be deprived of the labors of good and strong men.

Ever yours,
J. R. STUBBERT.

It is not often that we take the liberty of publishing what is not written for publication. We feel disposed however to do so in a few lines just received from a young lady in a Western country, as we think that what she

writes may be the means of benefiting others, and will at any rate shew what liberal things a liberal soul may devise, she will thus have the "more blessed" for a whole year. As we have no permission to give the names we omit them, and hope to be pardoned the liberty we have taken:—

Dec. 29th, 1871.

Mr. Selden,—

DEAR SIR—You will pardon me if I trouble you with a few lines enclosed, with which is two dollars, a subscription for your valuable paper for the coming year, "1872." You will be kind enough to send it to the following address.

Mrs. — is a friend of mine, and is in rather poor circumstances as regards the things of this world, and has thus I find been debarred from obtaining literature, which such a mind as hers must hunger for. And I suppose there are many, many in like situations. I wish it were in my power to give to all such the blessing of a weekly visit from a paper like the *Christian Messenger*. And of those who can possibly afford it, how many deprive themselves and their children of the pleasant matter to be found in many of our religious papers. I wish that parents and guardians more generally would feel themselves, and teach their children that this kind of reading in the home-circle, is, or should be considered, indispensable. During the past Summer while in —, I visited my friend Mrs. — and in the few weeks spent there, the missing of my home reading taught me how great must be the privation of doing without it the year round.

I am, dear Sir,
Very respectfully yours,

REV. GEO. A. WEATHER sends us the following notice of his wife's departure:—
KEMPT, Jan. 5th, 1872.

Dear Brother Selden,—

Having been called to give the parting hand to my dear wife, daughter of Alexander Blair of Onslow, I send you tidings of her death, to be borne by the *Messenger* to those who will doubtless remember us at a throne of grace in this time of sorrow. The disease by which she was hastened to the grave, first manifested itself by a slight pain in the knee, which proved to be white swelling. The first of her suffering was at Brother Samuel Brown's at the time of the Convention. She often spoke of the kind attention received at that time. To her our homeward journey was a tiresome one, and when we reached home she was carried into the house, to go out no more till after death, which took place on the night of the 29th of Dec. But her night of suffering is past; she sleeps in Jesus and is blest. She was one who could say in truth "My soul doth wish mount Zion well." To promote the cause of Christ was her most earnest desire. Many will remember her words of admonition.

We desire to bless God that the gloomy night of sorrow was lighted with the assurance that there awaits her a glorious resurrection, and that even now her deathless spirit is with Jesus, among the spirits of just men made perfect. In the hour of sadness kind friends came to us like angels of mercy vying with each other in acts of kindness. The Lord sustain them in the time of trouble.

The funeral services were conducted by Brother Coburn. He took as his text Phil. i. 21, and preached much to the edification of his hearers. May the Lord overrule the event for his own glory and our good.

GEO. WETHERS.

Our Brother will have the sympathy of many friends for himself and family, under this sorrowful dispensation of Divine Providence.

Our United Prayer Meetings are in progress morning and evening according to the published programme. There is an excellent spirit prevailing in them, and they have been largely attended thus far. May great good arise from them to all the churches.

PRAY FOR THE JEWS.—In former years, the Evangelical Alliance inserted in its programme for the week of prayer, "Saturday for the conversion of the Jews." This year, this part of the programme has been omitted; and, therefore, the Board of the American Christian Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews in New York and elsewhere, resolved, at their last stated meeting, to call the attention of all Christians to this too much neglected duty to pray for Israel, and to request, especially, to remember on that day the laborers in that field who are engaged in bringing the gospel of the Son of God to that people, and to ask for the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of the seed of Abraham."

We perceive by our N. B. exchanges that the New School Law is being applied with vigor. The School meetings throughout the Province are to be held to-morrow the 11th Inst., at which the Boards of Trustees are to be elected, and the arrangements made