

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. Annual Pastoral Calls.

There is a growing tendency among our churches to adopt the somewhat modern practice of extending an annual call to their pastors—in other words, of hiring ministers by the year. I am not in a position to give information as to the exact extent to which the custom prevails, but there is reason for believing that it is followed by a large majority of our churches. The time has fully come when this matter should receive attention from our brethren. If the practice is a wise one let us by all means advocate its general observance; but if it is unsound in principle and harmful in its results let us give it our hearty and united resistance.

In the days of the Baptist fathers of this Province it was not the custom of our churches to call their pastors by the year. Men who were regarded as being called of God to preach the gospel of salvation and to become overseers in Christ's spiritual kingdom, were called by the churches to minister to them in holy things, without any specified limitations as to their continuance in pastoral authority. Ministers were not then regarded as hirelings, but were esteemed as spiritual fathers, and were bound to their flocks by such strong ties of mutual affection, that nothing but death or peculiar circumstances could separate them from each other. Those were the days when ministers had great spiritual power, and when the people received great spiritual blessings. Those were the days of genuine revivals and of wondrous manifestations of Divine power.

Looking still further back into the past, it is obvious that in Apostolic days no such thing was dreamed of as that of calling pastors by the year. We hear of no intimation on the part of the brethren at Crete that they wished to limit the pastorate of their youthful bishop, Titus, to the term of twelve months; or that the brethren at Ephesus were unwilling to engage the services of the beloved John for a longer period than one year. Such a thing as an annual call was, we venture to affirm, unknown in New Testament times.

How, then, has the modern custom of calling ministers by the year come into existence? For what reason has the innovation been made? Beyond a doubt the custom originated among mercenary churches, and it has been quietly accepted by equally mercenary ministers. The love of novelty, a desire to make a show, to draw large congregations, and to fill the church coffers—these are the motives which generally lead our churches to seek for frequent changes in the pastorate. It makes quite a sensation in a community to have a new preacher every few months. True, the interest dies out about as rapidly as it arose; but then a partial remedy is found in bringing about another change. This ingenious custom reminds us of nothing more forcibly than of the children's story of "Blue-beard," who, as he grew tired of each wife, slew her, and, throwing her body among the remains of her slain predecessors, proceeded immediately to marry a new one. If we were to open the charnel houses of some of our churches and gaze upon the mortal remains of their beheaded ministers, our hearts would sicken at the ghastly spectacle.

There is but one argument in favor of the modern custom that has even a semblance of reason in it, namely, that the system of calling annually prevents pastors from remaining longer in a church than the people desire. Let us examine this specious argument in the light of well-known facts. In some of the oriental countries it is said that when a number of persons are arrested on suspicion of having committed a crime worthy of death, all are executed so as to make sure of punishing the guilty one. Very much of the same kind is the practice of subjecting all our pastors to the handcuffs of a yearly call, because a few ministers happen to be unmanageable. As a rule the innocent ones suffer whilst the guilty escape. We have known overbearing pastors who, in spite of annual calls have, by a dexterous manipulation of affairs, remained year after year in a church, bidding defiance to all dissentients. It is very doubtful

whether in one case out of a hundred the system of extending annual calls accomplishes the purpose for which it was designed. On the contrary, it succeeds only too well in driving away ministers whom the great majority of a church desire to remain. And in this way: those annual meetings held for the purpose of considering the propriety of renewing the call to the present incumbent, give an opportunity for a few restless spirits, who care little for the rights of a pastor and less for the welfare of a church, and who love novelty and change more than faithful preaching and sound doctrine, to exhibit their fickleness and implacability by balloting black beans against their minister. These dissentients may indeed be few in number, but the yearly recurrence of such scenes tends to irritate the sensitive feelings of a conscientious pastor who loves to see unanimity among his flock. As a result, the pastor feels compelled to leave even though a two-thirds majority are in favor of his remaining. After the departure of the pastor the church is thrown into disorder and strife, the majority of the members justly feeling that their wishes have been set at defiance by a few irrepressible and restless persons. Yet we affirm from personal observation that this is precisely the experience of a number of churches that have adopted the annual call system.

The system is objectionable on other grounds. It is exceedingly unjust towards ministers. The very idea of asking a minister, with his family,—and that usually a large one—to remove to a new field, where a large outlay must be made in procuring furniture and other conveniences, for the payment of which the first year's salary is seldom sufficient, with the understanding that he may be dismissed at the end of the year, is so preposterous that we are amazed to find any pastor willing to accept such a call.

If it seem desirable to fix limitations to the pastor's term of service, let such limitations be made with some sense of decency and propriety. The Methodists, in their system of itinerancy, adopt the plan of spending three years in their respective fields. Many of their ministers complain that even this term is too short on account of the great expense involved in moving so frequently. Besides this, the Methodists, as a rule, have parsonages, and these well furnished, so as to lessen the necessary expenses of their ministers. In view of these facts, what are we to think of the practice of some of our Baptist churches, many of which are not only without furnished parsonages, but even without parsonages, and which, nevertheless, have the hardihood to ask a minister to engage with them by the year? Our only surprise is that so many of our ministers have quietly submitted to a system imposing upon them sacrifices so great and so unnecessary.

The yearly call system is without precedent in Scripture, without justice in application, and without benefit in any respect in its results. It greatly injures both churches and pastors, and fosters in both feelings of mistrust and dislike. The system turns our pastors into hirelings, and causes the rapid spread in the churches of that malignant epidemic known in the New Testament under the name of "itching ears." We have reason to fear that the days have already come which were foretold by Paul when he declared that, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, because they have itching ears." The variation in the quotation and the italics bring out the exact force of the original Greek.

The old system is in all respects the best one. Let pastors be called to labor with churches for such time as mutual affection and the blessing of God seem to indicate. So soon as that mutual good-will ceases and the Divine blessing is withheld, the engagement should end, whether six months or six years have elapsed since the pastorate was assumed. Let all our pastors resolve to discountenance this yearly call practice, and it will soon be a thing of the past. If we are obliged to have definite limits to the duration of pastoral service, let the Methodist plan be adopted of having three years of service with furnished parsonages. But even this plan is too objectionable to be worthy of acceptance.

A CHURCH MEMBER. March 20, 1879.

For the Christian Messenger. Early Education.

That both the Free School and the Sabbath School, when properly conducted, are blessings to any community, must be conceded by all. But as they are sometimes used, or rather abused, they actually stand in the way of the proper training of the young. This is not of necessity so, for their object and tendency are in the right direction. But in too many instances, the training which properly belongs to the nursery and to parental influence is left to these Institutions.

Nothing can successfully take the place of that instruction which should be imparted before the nursery is exchanged for the school room. The time spent under the immediate supervision of the parent is the most important period of the child's education. It is then that seeds of after growth are planted, whose fruitage lies in the far off eternity, and no amount of skill and faithfulness on the part of the child's after teachers can compensate the neglect or bad training of the nursery. There is unquestionably a great deal of fault found with the Sabbath and Common School that might be with greater propriety charged to the character or neglect of parental instruction. If under the eye of the parent the child is left to imbibe false notions of morals, to acquire loose habits of living, to use idle or obscene words, such as would mantle the cheek of modesty with crimson, to indulge selfish desires and headstrong purposes; it will be long before any Free or Sabbath School, or any kind or amount of instruction will be able to correct these evil habits.

That no school is perfect is readily admitted. That Sabbath and Common Schools are especially exposed to complaints is certain, the youthful character of pupils that attend almost compel them to be so. And especially when mothers as a class are prone to listen to the complaints of their children, even when these are laid against some faithful teacher whose duty obliges him to inflict punishment. Not only do these mothers listen, but they repeat the complaints made by their children in their presence, with marked emphasis, to the injury of both teacher and child. The child thus is led to think itself the martyr, and the teacher the oppressor. Not unfrequently is the pupil in this way, but also the parent made to hate the teacher when all influence for good is destroyed.

While we thus write about the mothers, we do not forget that among the fathers there are those whose weakness on this point is every way equal to that of the mothers. They do not hesitate to take sides with their children in all their contests with the teacher, and thereby excite hostility where good will and respect are actually due. Now, to say the least this is injudicious. Such a course should be taken with the utmost caution lest an injury be done to the child. In most cases the pupil is decidedly in fault. The most of the complaints rest on some prejudice, ill-will, or other false foundation. But few if any just causes of complaint exist. Cruel treatment to children is in this country a thing of the past, if it ever existed.

The cure for the complaints of the day, as regards the schools for the young, lies for the most part in the nursery. Let parents there do their duty, and seven-eighths of the complaints we hear will be wrapped in linen and ready for the grave.

Hoping, Mr. Editor, that the day is not far distant when every one will strive for the things that make for peace, and that success will everywhere crown the effort, I am, most truly yours

AN OLD MAN. Wolfville, March 3, 1879.

For Christian Messenger.

The Yosemite Valley.

MARAPOSA CO., CALIFORNIA.

Situated near the south-easterly line of the county, on the Merced River, is the Valley of the Yosemite, with its stupendous surroundings. Here, within a space of less than twenty miles long and ten wide, are presented more picturesque, grand and beautiful scenery, more striking and original views than

are, perhaps, to be found within any similar area in the world. If travelers may be credited, within no other compass so narrow on the face of the globe, have so many high and steep precipices, such lofty cascades and awful chasms, such deep and beautiful vallies, overlooked by so many towering domes, high bastions and splintered spires, all of bold and glistening granite, been grouped together as in and around this Valley of the Yosemite. The name is of Indian origin, and should be pronounced with four syllables, accenting the second, Yo-sem-i-te.

Geographically, this spot is said to be near the middle of the State, measuring north and south, and exactly in the centre of the Sierra Nevada, it being thirty-five miles to either base. It is one hundred and forty miles, in a direct line, a little south from San Francisco; the distance by the usual route via Stockton and Courtville, or Maraposa, being about two hundred and fifty miles. The valley proper, which has an elevation of 4060 feet above the level of the sea, is eight miles long and from half a mile to one mile wide. The greatest breadth being near its middle, where it is three miles across, and whence it tapers gradually towards each end. It is so nearly level that the Merced River, running through it, moves with a gentle current, expanding at several points into the little lakes, the water is so perfectly pure that it reflects the surrounding peaks and cliffs with wonderful distinctness. This river at all seasons is a considerable stream; when the snow on the mountains above is melting is therefore the most favorable season for visiting the valley, as the falls are then displayed to the best advantage. Entering the valley at its lower or westerly end by a descent of 2000 feet, down a steep mountain trail, its course for the first six miles is north-east, when it makes a sharp angle, and runs nearly south-east. At its lower extremity, the flat land ceasing, all semblance of a valley is lost in a canon, so deep and precipitously walled that it may be pronounced inaccessible. Proceeding up the valley, hemmed in by walls of yellowish granite, from 2000 to 4000 feet high, the first conspicuous object met with is the Pohono, by some called the Bridal Veil Fall, on the right hand side, with the Cathedral Rock, about 3000 feet high, standing behind it. On the other side of the valley is the Tutucanua, or El Capitan cliff, and a little above the Pohono Fall, the Cathedral Rock, backed by the Cathedral spires, two slender columns of granite are passed, and we arrive two miles above, at a group of peaks standing on the other side of the valley, to which the name Three Brothers has been given. From the loftiest of these—4000 feet high—more than 8000 feet feet above the level of the sea, is to be obtained one of the best views of the valley and its immediate surroundings, including also the towering summits of the Sierra in the back ground. Standing over against this group, and near the angle where the valley, turning, bends to the south-east, is a cluster of prominent cliffs, the top of the highest, 3000 feet above its base, and which, from its having the form of a regular obelisk for more than 1000 feet down, has been named Sentinel Rock. Three-quarters of a mile south-east of the Sentinel stands the Dome, 4150 feet high, its horizontal section nearly circular, and its slope regular all around.

Directly across the Valley from the Sentinel Rock is the Yosemite Fall, where the stream of the same name, twenty feet wide and two deep at high water, precipitates itself over a cliff, falling at one bound a vertical distance of 1500 feet, after which it makes, by a series of cascades, a further descent of 626 feet, in the course of the third of a mile, when, with a final bound of 400 feet, it leaps to the bottom of the valley—making in this short distance a total descent of 2526 feet, some calculations making it even a little more. Having, however, in this instance, as in all other cases pertaining to heights and distances in and around this valley, adopted the figures of the State Geological Survey, the measurements may safely be accepted as being, if not absolutely correct, at least more nearly so than any others extant. Two miles above this Fall the main Valley of the Yosemite ends, running into three deep gorges; the central, through which flows

the Merced river, running nearly east and west, and the Tenaya fork, bearing to the north, while the Valley of the Illilounette, through which also flows a considerable stream, ascends in a southerly direction. Following up the Tenaya canon to a point a little above its mouth, we have on the right, in full view, and what has been for a long time partially in sight, the most grand and impressive object in or around the valley. This consists of a fearful cliff, 4737 feet high, named the Half Dome, from the fact that one face is rounded in form, while the other is perfectly vertical, giving the impression that one half of what was once a regular dome-shaped mountain has been broken off and engulfed; which is no doubt really the case, though there are no fragments on the surface at the base, nor any ruins left to show what has become of the lost portions. Without any compeer in the mountain topography elsewhere, it stands isolated and vast, a striking monument to some strange dynamic movement, all other traces of which have been covered up.

On the opposite side of Tenaya Valley stands the North Dome, another rounded structure of granite. Its summit elevated 3568 feet above its base. Flanking one side of it is a vast but-tress, called the Washington Column; and in the side of the cliff adjacent is a series of vaulted chambers, formed by the sliding down of immense fragments of rock from above, named the Royal Arches. Further up the canon, reposing under the awful shadow of the Half Dome, is a little lake called Tisdazac, which, like all of the waters here, is ever cold and as pellucid as crystal. Along the middle or Merced canon are several remarkable cataracts, as well as many lofty cliffs and peaks, some of the latter hardly inferior in the majesty of their proportions to the Half Dome itself, though less unique and impending. The two most noteworthy falls on this stream, rendered exceedingly grand when the river is at high stages, are the Vernal, or Puiyac, or the lowest down and the Nevada—the former having a perpendicular height of 475 feet, and the latter of 639 feet, the river making a total descent of more than 2000 feet in a distance of two miles. There are also many grand cataracts and cascades on the Illilounette, or south fork, along which the scenery partakes largely of the bold character with that already described; though this branch has been less explored than the main valley, or either of the others. Scattered over the principal as well as the lower slopes of the mountains are groves of pine, mixed with which, in the valley, are several species of oak, with some willow and poplar. The latter, usually called cotton-wood, being what in the East is known as the Balm of Gilead. These forests, abounding with grassy glades and lakes, and being filled in the summer with a variety of wild flowers, the whole valley approximates nearer a scene of enchantment than anything else to be found in nature.

The climate here in the winter is rigorous, the valley at this season being almost completely shut out from the sun, and the snow falling so deep on the trails leading into it as to render it difficult of access before the middle of May. In the summer the atmosphere is kept cool by the lakes and running water, and the spray from the Falls—the sun, even at this season, never shining on many parts of the valley. Near Crane's Flat, thirty miles south-east of the town of Maraposa, occurs another grove of mammoth trees, similar to those in Calaveras County. This group contains 427 trees, varying in size from 20 to 34 feet in diameter, and from 275 to 325 feet in height. This grove has an altitude of nearly 6000 feet above the level of the sea. It is scattered over an area of about 500 acres. The remains of a prostrate tree, now nearly consumed by fire, indicates that it must have attained a diameter of about 40 feet and a height of 400. Near this large grove are two others, the one containing 86 and the other 35 trees, the average size is about the same as those in the principal grove.

CALIFORNIA.

Mr. Spurgeon's health is improving. He has been able to walk a little without the aid of his staff. The services at the Tabernacle are being conducted by Mr. Charles Spurgeon.