

THE PRESBYTERIAN.

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REGRETTING the small attendance of Elders at the meetings of Synod, a respected correspondent in last month's *Presbyterian*, suggests that congregations should have the option of selecting as their representatives, Elders from any of the charges of the Church, and appears inclined to recommend for that purpose the Elders in the city sessions. The small attendance of Elders at the Church Courts is the cause of deep regret to all, as it evidences a want of interest and deprives the members who attend the meeting of much valuable counsel. But the remedy for the evil, which our correspondent proposes, would probably be worse than the evil as it now exists. There seems to be a very serious misapprehension as to the end to be gained by securing a large attendance of Elders. It is not the mere numbers that it is desirable to secure. There is no doubt that able business men are to be found in city charges; men of weight and influence; men undoubtedly of sincere piety, and who would be an ornament as well as of great use to any deliberative body. Such an admission may be cheerfully made, and the admission would be no more than one of a fact well known to exist. But what would be the influence on the Church at large by making a change in the law. At present a representative can only be appointed from a charge out of the members of its Kirk Session, and the complaint is that those appointed do not attend. Before proceeding to obtain a change in the law, it would seem to be the most natural thing to ask why the present law does not work, and what are the obstacles in the way. To these points we shall afterwards direct attention, but first it is necessary in discussing this question to ascertain the effect to be sought for. The object of the meetings of Synod is undoubtedly to obtain the whole mind of the Church on the questions coming up for discussion and decision. It is not sufficient in many cases to have merely the opinions of a portion of the Church, however influential and intelligent

that portion may be. In ordinary matters even the decision of a committee might be accepted as sufficient, in those cases, that is, in which no principle is involved. There are others, however, in which it is not only desirable but necessary, to obtain the views of the members of all the charges. The danger incurred by selecting representatives almost exclusively from city charges, would be that the Church might be led into adopting a course, not only not in accordance with, but in direct opposition, to, the wishes of the majority of its members. At the time of the schism in 1844, a portion of the Ministers and Elders of the Church withdrew from our communion and declared, among other very weighty accusations, that our Church had "refused to discharge the obvious duty of lifting up a full and unambiguous testimony for the truth;" "that the members of the Synod had virtually receded from their solemn pledges;" "that they had most seriously endangered the purity of the Church and brought even her independence into peril;" "that in matters fundamental sin had been done by this court," (that is by the Synod of our Church). Had Synod at that time been constituted by such a partial representation of the Church at is now proposed, and had the majority of these instead of a small minority, been in favour of severing the connection with the Church of Scotland, the maintenance of which has always been our boast, what would have been the effect on the majority who were only inferentially represented? Upon the country congregations, who are by far the largest portion of the Church? They are now only too neglectful of the duty of sending representatives to the Synod, yet it will not be maintained that this is owing to the want of able, sound thinking men, who, from having more leisure from their occupations to meditate on such questions as affect the welfare of the Church, have pondered over them more deeply and come to their discussion better prepared to arrive at a right decision, than are those whose