

THE PRESBYTERIAN.

There it is that the battle of life must be fought by each of us; there it is, that amid privation, and toil, and self denial, and perhaps much tribulation, we are called to maintain the conflict with principalities and powers of evil; there, expending and being spent, we must win our crown and gather laurels for ourselves, and glory for our Master, in fighting the good fight of faith.

Fathers and Brethren,—Matters of great importance to the interest of the Redeemer's Kingdom have been under your consideration. Amongst other subjects you have been considering the spiritual destitution of the country; you have declared the desirableness of having more labourers in this portion of the Vineyard, and you have resolved on adopting means for increasing, if possible, the number of our Ministers. In this you have done well, and in this, by the blessing of God, I trust you will succeed. But, whether successful or not in this, we must not forget that every converted man is, or ought to be, a witness for Christ, and in his own place and sphere a missionary. Thus Philip was no sooner found of Christ than, finding Nathanael, he tells him of Jesus. No sooner did the Messiah reveal Himself to the woman of Samaria than she ran and called her townsmen that they might see and believe. And the man of Gadara had no sooner experienced the powers of Christ's salvation than he departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him. Thus it still is, and ever will be. Every believer is, or ought to be, in his own place and sphere, a light to others. He is called to be a priest in his family, ministering to his household. In the world he is to be a witness of the Truth, an epistle known and read of all men. And therefore, if, by the blessing of God upon our labours, we are made instrumental in increasing the number of enlightened, earnest, spiritual converts, we advance the interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom no less than by the increase of Christian Ministers. Hence a little more diligence and success on the part of each of us in our respective parishes may be as productive of great and glorious fruits as if we were successful in all that we contemplate in regard to bringing additional Ministers from our own Fatherland. Let this thought stimulate and encourage us as we return to our labours. Let it quicken our zeal, and make us earnest, prayerful, and indefatigable in seeking the conversion of souls.

Fathers and Brethren,—The affairs of the University have also engaged your attention. You have been considering the desirableness of carrying it on with greater efficacy, and you have been devising means for adding to the staff of Professors, increasing, if possible, the number of Students for the Ministry, and elevating the standard of their education.

Here you find difficulties in the way, and see not how the objects in view are to be all attained. However desirable, you may not succeed in all that you purpose in regard to the University. In these circumstances let us remember, and let the thought comfort us, that every godly family, every family brought under the transforming and abiding influence of the Gospel, is a Christian Seminary, a centre from which light and agency must go forth for the enlightenment and conversion of others. It is as a school of the prophets, where those are being trained who are to be the fathers and mothers of a coming generation—the upbringers of a goodly seed—a nursery of plants of righteousness, with which districts and townships are to be sown and planted. Since coming to Montreal, a brother, who is now present, has told me that in a bed of seedlings of his own raising he some years ago found a new and beautiful variety of a favourite flower; and by careful cultivation it has been so multiplied and dispersed that now he finds it in almost every part of the Province which he visits, adorning with its beauty and perfuming with its fragrance many a garden. And instances not a few can be given in this land, where one or two families, the first settlers in the bush, have in course of time spread themselves over the surrounding district, and given, if not a religious, at least a denominational character to a whole community. We can scarcely over-estimate, therefore, the importance of even one enlightened, earnest Christian family in a new and thinly peopled country. It is like a handful of grain that, sown and reaped, and sown and reaped again, may furnish seed for a thousand fields. And thus you see how by the blessing of God upon your Ministry, if you could, each in his own congregation, bring a few families under the permanent influence of the Gospel so as to be thoroughly enlightened and disciplined by the Truth, and leavened by the grace of God, you might do more in reality for the glory of God and the salvation of souls than if you, as some might wish ability to do, endow a Professorship and prepare a dozen of Students for the University of Queen's College.

The subject of Presbyterial or Synodical visitations has also been under your consideration. These in some form or other seem needful, and, if wisely conducted, would doubtless be the means of strengthening the hands and encouraging the hearts of many a brother, of stimulating in many cases both Ministers and People to the faithful discharge of their respective duties, and in other cases of correcting abuses, and removing evils, that are a blot upon our Church. The conviction is evidently deepening in your minds that these visitations are demanded by the circumstances of the Church, and sooner or later must be carried out. And

in anticipation of them it were well that we returned to our congregations, each of us resolved that, so far as in us lies, our little field of the Vineyard shall be cultivated well; I say well, for, just as in the cultivation of the earth, as we see every day, the husbandman, unwisely expending his labour over too large an extent of ground, loses in a great measure the reward of his industry, so may it be in the spiritual Vineyard, in the husbandry of souls. And better cultivate the little spot and cultivate it well than by attempting the large field lose the reward of the harvest. One of the first Presbyterian Missionaries in the Upper Province furnishes a striking illustration of this. Although a workman that needed not to be ashamed, earnest in spirit, abundant in labours, willing to spend and to be spent, ever ready to respond to the distant call for help, he watered many a drooping plant in the wilderness, and furnished the bread of life to many a hungry soul, yet, from the urgent necessity of the times, scattering the precious seed over an extent of country too wide for any one man to watch over or to cultivate, he necessarily did so at the expense of his own immediate congregation. He prepared gold and silver and precious stones for the building of the spiritual house, but there was no bringing together of the living stones that they might be built up together as a living temple; and, when gathered to his fathers, he left behind him scarcely the fragment of a congregation. I remember once meeting, in the neighbourhood of Valcartier, one who invited me to visit her country dwelling. Like Naomi of old, she had neither husband nor son to till her little parcel of ground in the midst of the forest. She could do little herself, but she told me that she did what she could. And, speaking of her little field, she said, "it is worth seeing, for there is neither a stump nor stone, nor thistle in it all, and it is wonderful what it produces." Observe the fact—there were no stumps, she had burned them down—no stones, she had gathered them off—and no thistles, she had weeded them out. Observe the reward—"it is wonderful what it produces."

Fathers and Brethren,—Let us resolve that our field in the Lord's Vineyard shall be like the widow's field. Let us, like her, do what we can—like her, let us do that little well. Let us be steadfast, immovable, &c.

And then, when the visitations come to us, be they Synodical or Presbyterial, we will be prepared to welcome them. And may the Master of the Vineyard so prosper and bless the labours of each of us that it may at no distant period be said of each individual congregation of our Church; It is worth seeing and wonderful in its fruits.

Fathers and Brethren,—Your attention has been directed to the condition and