

GREAT PRESBYTERIANS.

Few congregations of any denomination are to be found that do not contain individuals who are known among their fellow church members by a name similar to that which forms the heading of this article. We can picture to ourselves a great Methodist, peculiar in his conversation, fervent in his responses, and strong in his advocacy of protracted meetings, the class system and local preachers. The great Episcopalian, or Churchman, as, aping the intolerance of Rome he terms himself, clings to forms and ceremonies as the life of the church, and scowls at churches as ancient and much purer than his own, whose ministers and members he dare not brand as heretics, but hates equally well under the name of Dissenters. The great Congregationalist or Independent will manage everything from his pastor's walk and conversation to the weightiest matters of state; and emulate the spirit of Puritan independency whether circumstances demand it or no. The great Baptist has a portion of his role taken from him by the Congregationalist, but happily he has still a great part of his own to play with which none may interfere; he shuts up his uncharitable soul to close communion, and preaches adult immersion as equally necessary to salvation with faith and repentance. We are apt to smile at, while we condemn, the weakness and follies of those in other denominations who are great in this sense of ultraism, forgetting too frequently, as self complacently we institute a comparison between them and ourselves, that there exists a class of great Presbyterians.

Some of these great Presbyterians are good men—not many. The reason of this is that few men are honored with the title unless their Presbyterianism is the most prominent feature in their religion. Let a man love his church with all his heart, be fully convinced of her scriptural character and adaptation to the wants of the world, let him be ready to follow the martyrs of old who died for “our covenanted reformation” with a heart-hatred of Popery, Prelacy and all their kin, yet if that man speak more of Christ than of Presbytery, if his holy life and Christian activity be more prominent than the assertion of his ecclesiastical connection, he is not fit to be called a great Presbyterian. The great Presbyterian has a supreme contempt for every other form of religion. It is vain to tell him that all the Protestant denominations, at least, contain important elements of goodness, and that the majority in them adhere to evangelical truth. No Pharisee ever shook off the dust that contact with publican, Samaritan or heathen had left upon his garments with greater disdain than does the great Presbyterian disclaim the slightest connection with any outside of the Presbyterian fold. It is not an uncommon experience for missionaries to find in places where the ordinances of our church have not penetrated, but where other denominations have been for years at work, individuals and families who, to use their own expression, have never darkened the door of a building erected for religious worship, lest they might apostatize or be thought to do so. They would rather give up their Christianity than their Presbyterianism. There are even men living in the midst of gospel ordinances administered by the church to which they profess to belong, who yet never avail themselves of these, and are, notwithstanding, called great Presbyterians. A traditional connection, a speech for the denomination, a rough joke levelled against other bodies, a contribution, are often material enough to hang the name upon. We have heard of a great Presbyterian whose talk has often delighted an admiring circle of hearers as he has