

PRESBYTERIANISM ON THE RIVER ST. JOHN.

At its last regular meeting in this city, I was appointed by the Presbytery of St. John to visit Woodstock and Richmond, and preach on the 9th of Aug. in the churches left vacant by the departure of the Rev. James Kidd, for Canada West. Accordingly, at 4 p. m. on Friday, I left Indiantown on board the swift and comfortable steamer *Fawn*, and was carried in six hours to Fredericton. It was a lovely summer's evening. There was not wind enough to wrinkle the river's surface, and, in the purple rays of the setting sun, the rich scenery of the St. John looked lovelier than ever. The river has always been remarkable for its beautiful trees, and along the extensive meadows and marshes, and particularly on the numerous islands, the beeches and elms cannot be surpassed for richness of foliage and gracefulness of form. It would be difficult to find anything in all nature more perfectly beautiful to the eye than one of these stately elms standing out alone on the level plains, its roots imbedded in the rich meadow, its tall straight stem, with its green massive foliage drooping gracefully from the hidden branches. There is a quiet inexpressible repose about the elm, especially when you see it through the soft trembling twilight of a summer's evening, and on the edge of a river in which its graceful form is reflected. I could not help thinking of David's beautiful similes in the first psalm, and also that employed by Jeremiah—chap. 17, 8—when speaking of the man that trusted in God:—"For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots by the river. He shall not see when heat cometh, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." But when one turns from the green and graceful things in nature, to the hard, shapeless things made by man, what a contrast is visible! In God's world we see things rounded and beautifully curved. God's emblem is the circle—the leaf, the tree, the pebble on the beach, the planet in the sky, and the dew drop on the flower—all are curved and pleasant to the eye. But even the house which man builds and dedicates to God is often a hard, severe looking pile of clapboards and shingles. All along the river's banks one sees what the country people call "*Meetin'-houses*"—a horrid name intended to mean a place of worship. These "*Meetin'-houses*" are extremely ugly—so ugly that one is at first sight led to suppose that they are Presbyterian. But, on enquiry, he almost invariably finds that they belong to the Baptists or Methodists, according as they are close to or removed from the water. The Episcopal churches, as a general thing, have an ecclesiastical air about them, and, even though the steeples were knocked off, they could hardly be mistaken for store-houses or sail-lofts. Between Fredericton and St. John there are Episcopalian, Baptist, Methodist and Roman Catholic places of worship, visible from the river, but I think I am correct in saying that there is not a single Presbyterian Church. In the Provincial Capital there are two—one belonging to the Church of Scotland, and the other to the Church of the Lower Provinces. The former is an old and wealthy congregation, and they have recently given proof of their energy and ability by the erection of a fine new Session House, and by thoroughly painting their church inside and out. In connection with Dr. Brooke's church, there is a fine manse and garden, and indeed everything belonging to the congregation of St. Paul's bears the marks of a quiet, steady progress. The small congregation in connection with the church of the Lower Provinces, is at present without a pastor—the Rev. Mr. Sterling, with the true spirit of an Evangelist, having set out on a missionary tour to the more neglected country districts. In Fredericton, as in many other places in this Province, it is easily seen that there is only sufficient material for the support of one good healthy congregation, and, therefore, all attempts to establish and maintain a second—while they may gratify the lovers of schism—certainly cannot tend to promote either the glory of God or the good of men.