

selves intentionally ignorant of the small manuals now within their reach are the very persons, however much they may clamour for direct appeals to the Bible, who make very indifferent and unsuccessful students of God's Book. I do not say that we have many within our pale of the class now referred to, and I have no wish to press the charge of ignorance unduly. The people of other denominations often generously volunteer the opinion that we are better read in Divine things than they are themselves, and perhaps it is unwise in us to cast suspicion upon what is thus so graciously asserted. We have certainly a sort of traditional glory in this respect which it would be well to vindicate by convincing all of our possession of solid attainments; and I should be delighted to think that all our people, young and old, could pass a searching examination in the fundamental principles and even the minute details of our scriptural polity; but I cannot venture to believe that they possess any such knowledge. My fear is that proper scrutiny into the matter by ministers and elders would disclose lamentable ignorance on the part of vast numbers as to the doctrines, the constitution, and the discipline of the Church, constituting, as is self-evident, a most formidable hindrance to the spread of Presbyterianism.

II. A second hindrance arises from the failure of our Elders to come up to the scriptural ideal of their office, and hence comparative inactivity among their ranks.

Probably we all fail—both ministers and people—to take in the full significance of the fact that ours is a Presbyterian Church, and apostolic in this respect—a church instructed, edified, and ruled, under Jesus Christ, by Presbyters or Elders. Let us try to understand for a moment the status of our elders according to Scripture and the practice of our