

The Presbyterian.

A MISSIONARY AND RELIGIOUS RECORD



OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA IN CONNECTION WITH THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

CONDUCTED BY A COMMITTEE OF THE LAY ASSOCIATION.

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The Presbyterian.

TO OUR READERS.

Again we stand upon the threshold of a New Year, and new duties and responsibilities are opening out before us. The year 1852 has been numbered with the past; and who can tell what of change may be ordained to take place during the year on which we have now entered? Who of our many readers can tell what of blessing or of sorrow may be in store for him? To some will come trials and suffering—to some, reverses and misfortunes—to others prosperity will be added; but to all will be measured out that which will be best for them, though to human comprehension the decrees of Providence may seem mysterious. The present season is indeed one which should lead to reflection. A few more grains have fallen from the hourglass of our days, another portion of the brief space allotted to mere mortal existence has passed away, and who can fathom that future which lies before us all? Ere another year has come, many a heart, which now bounds joyously, will have ceased to beat, and many will have lost for ever the opportunities for laying hold of life eternal, which this our earthly sojourn is graciously permitted to afford. Standing then, as we do, in the twilight of the Old Year, with all its events rushing rapidly in review before us, we feel deeply the responsibility which may be imposed on us in the conduct of a Journal, which will pass under the view of so many readers during the ensuing year. To please them all we hope

not, but to benefit some we shall humbly strive. It shall be our aim to place before them materials for thought—suggestions for action—materials which may help to keep before their minds the one thing needful. The conductors of a religious Journal occupy a deeply responsible position—they are called to forge one of the many chains of influences by which Society is linked together. Mind is ever acting and reacting on mind—impressions are being given—characters are being moulded, and, when a trifling word may, humanly speaking, shape an immortal destiny, how careful should the conductors of the press be of all that they spread before the public eye. When there is so much of compromise with the world—when scientific writers and secular periodicals avoid religious topics—the religious press should give Truth no uncertain sound. The sermon reaches hundreds, but the periodical reaches thousands. The press, that mighty engine for good or ill, is active in the service of the worldling, the indifferent, the sceptical, and the openly irreligious. Infidelity and vice are pouring forth by its means a polluting flood. To counteract it in some measure, the Religious press has a solemn duty to perform, but, to accomplish that end, the Religious press must receive a warmer and more cordial support. Why should Secular periodicals circulate by hundreds where the Religious periodical scarcely follows by tens. This should not be; every family should have a Religious periodical as a regular visitant. Let every reader of such an one procure but a single subscriber, and the result would be astonish-

ing. And yet which of the readers of any of our Religious periodicals is possessed of so little influence over his friends or neighbours as to be unable to accomplish this? But, if the conductors of the press have duties to perform, the readers have duties too. At this, the dawning of a New Year, let each one, as he enters on a new fraction of the "few days" which are allotted to man's existence, examine himself, ponder his ways, and ask himself the momentous question, "How fares it with my soul." Let each one ask himself, "Have I laid hold of the hope set before me;" and, if in humble faith he can answer, "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief," oh, let him also remember that man lives not to himself alone—that he may not stand aloof from his fellow-man, and ask presumptuously, "Am I my brother's keeper?"—that he may not pass by "on the other side;" but that in the busy turmoil of life, in the anxious strife of gain, when interests clash and jostle, there is many an opening for the kindly hand of the good Samaritan, many an opportunity for scattering bread upon the waters, which after many days may be found again.

We trust our friends will exert themselves in remitting the subscriptions for the coming year and extending the circulation of this periodical. Our last issue was directed in red ink to such parties as, we believe, were in arrears. Errors may have occurred, as we know to have been the case in one or two instances; but all such will be cheerfully rectified, as soon as we are informed of them. We are