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Edited by Rev. Wm. Inglis.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1880.

TO THE READERS OF "THE PRESBYTERIAN."

THE commencement of a new volume of THE PRESBYTERIAN presents a fitting opportunity for saying a few words to its readers more directly personal than are generally indulged in. In the ninth year, as it is, of its existence, THE PRESBYTERIAN may very fairly be regarded as fully established, while its record during the whole term of its existence has been such that every one connected with its production and publication can look back upon it with a large amount of satisfaction and thankfulness. No infallibility has been claimed for its utterances, and nothing like absolute perfection for its contents. It very likely has sometimes said what might have been better left unsaid. It is more than possible that not a few things have been omitted which ought to have had special attention and prominence. But with all its imperfections and shortcomings, of which none can have been more aware than its conductors, it has honestly sought to serve the Church, and the increasing support which from year to year it has received has shewn very clearly that it has not done this in vain. It is not necessary to do more than merely refer in passing to its early struggles, and to the various discouraging circumstances with which it had to contend. These struggles were sometimes very severe, and the discouragements connected with them sufficiently numerous and depressing. They have, however, been successfully passed through, and to-day THE PRESBYTERIAN stands upon a firmer basis, and occupies a more influential position in the country, than ever it did before. Wise and considerate friends have helped it not a little in many ways. By their active sympathy, their considerate forbearance, their prudent counsel, their hearty commendation, their vigorous and appropriate literary contributions, and surely without any seeming impropriety it may, in this connection, be added, by their heartfelt prayers, they have often held up hands that sometimes were

ready to hang down in weariness, and have very effectually and timeously brought renewed strength when difficulties were most numerous and most formidable. It is not necessary, and, in the circumstances, would not be becoming, to dwell upon what might have been, had the sympathy been more general and the practical support more rapid and more widely extended. Everyone knows that the Presbyterians of Canada will support neither newspaper nor magazine simply as a matter of charity. It is well that this is the case, and therefore the slow, yet steady and uninterrupted, progress of THE PRESBYTERIAN, in the circumstances, has been at once a certificate to its worth, and an encouragement and stimulus to its improvement. That its progress henceforward will be increasingly rapid, is confidently anticipated, and certainly no pains or expense will be spared to make it more than ever worthy of finding a place in every Presbyterian home, not only of our own Province but of the whole Dominion.

That Christians have not sufficiently availed themselves of the periodical Press in prosecuting their work of faith and labour of love for the great Master, and for the cause that is by way of eminence "good," is now generally acknowledged. Much, no doubt, has in this way been accomplished, but not nearly so much as might long ere this have been achieved had more of God's people been wise to discern the signs of the times and to employ with appropriate energy the instrumentality which has been lying so conveniently and so invitingly to their hands. Will all the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN kindly and impartially consider whether or not they have been doing their duty in this respect, and will those also who are not among its readers, but to whom these words may come, do the same? If the influence of this publication is beneficial, why not extend it? If individuals have been thereby helped to "higher things," why not recommend it to others? And if it has been recognized, as it has been by many, as a useful and efficient medium of communication between the members of the Presbyterian Church all over Canada, why not take some trouble to make it more effectually serve this very necessary and important end?

In many parts of the Church it is to be regretted that THE PRESBYTERIAN is still all but unknown. Are the congregations where this is the case prospering the better on that account? It is to be more than doubted if they are prospering nearly so well. It is neither asked nor expected that ministers or elders should act as canvassing agents, but if all of these were henceforth to give the kindly word and the cordial commendation which some have been giving all these eight years and more, the results would be as gratifying as they would be beneficial.

Will the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN permit the present editor to say one or two words more directly personal? Beginning, as with this number we do, the second year of our connection with the paper, we cannot but gratefully recall the many kind and encouraging words which, during these past months, we have received from many upon whom we had no possible claim, and to whom, in many cases, we were altogether personally unknown. If the intercourse maintained from week to week has been half as pleasant to the readers as it has been to the editor, then it has been pleasant indeed, and profitable let us hope as well. To say that we have made THE PRESBYTERIAN all that, even according to our own ideal, it ought to be, would be as absurd as it would be offensive. None can feel more keenly than we do the varied imperfections and shortcomings in our work. But at the same time let us add, these shortcomings have been the result neither of a want of interest nor a lack of labour. The more, let us repeat, the circulation is extended the more the means for both improving the character and increasing the contents of THE PRESBYTERIAN will be put within our reach and turned, we hope, to good account.

To our contributors and correspondents we tender our most sincere and hearty thanks, and most earnestly ask from them a continuance and increase of their favours. Church news we specially invite, and to such we shall always give a ready place in our columns, if at all of general interest, though sometimes we may find it necessary to condense very considerably. Letters on all matters connected with church work and church life, if written at all in a decent and becomingly Christian manner, are always acceptable, and always so far in order. We may not be able to publish them all, and in some cases even those given may not

appear exactly as they are sent, but free and full discussion is what we like, and fair play what in all cases we seek to render.

We have often been asked to publish some of the sermons of the more celebrated preachers in the United States and Britain. In this matter, however, we prefer as far as possible to cultivate our home field. We have abundance of talent in the Presbyterian Church in Canada to far more than supply all the sermons which THE PRESBYTERIAN can, with propriety, publish in the course of the year, and we fully expect that in the future that supply will be both abundant and appropriate.

We continue our labours on THE PRESBYTERIAN with ever increasing interest and pleasure. That we have displeased some, though most unintentionally, and disappointed many, we can well believe. If, however, in even the humblest way we have helped forward the cause of truth and righteousness in this new land, and have to any, even the smallest, extent contributed to the consolidation and extension of our beloved Presbyterian Church, and of Christ's cause through it, we shall be abundantly satisfied. Under God it lies far more with the ministers and members of the Church than with us to determine, both by their contributions and commendations, how far in the future THE PRESBYTERIAN shall be increasingly made an instrument for good. That it has been so in the past, we know. That it shall be so in the future, and that to an ever growing extent, we sincerely hope. That so soon as it ceases to be this, it shall cease to exist, is what all connected with its production most honestly desire, and will most resolutely execute.

DOGMA? OR DOCTRINE? WHICH? OR WHAT?

IT is curious to notice how a very considerable number of persons who lay claim to the possession of a more than usually large amount of that undefinable something which they so fondly call "breadth" as well as of a corresponding quantity of "culture" and calmness, become very speedily excited, denunciatory and insolent whenever they think or speak of certain statements of supposed fact, or when the slightest reference is made, either by themselves or others, to certain opinions which they are pleased in their wisdom, to call "narrow," or to denounce as "dogmatic." Like the cynic with Plato's pride, they trample upon poor "dogma" with greater "dogmatism," and denounce the so-called positive and declared to be unsupported assertions of others, in statements which they themselves do not even pretend to say have any other backing than their own self-evolved ideas in reference to the eternal fitness of things as this ought to be whether it really is so or the reverse. "Dogma," it seems, is something very naughty, and if these gentlemen are only allowed to give their own definition of what it is, and to settle authoritatively what is to be so characterized, the whole is very plain sailing, and the result eminently satisfactory. Of course it is to be always taken for granted that what these wise men do not know is unknowable and what they do not understand is certainly meaningless jargon. Of late there has been a more than usual amount of this wild and foolish talk indulged in by men who while very wise, even to the confines of infallibility in their own estimation, have never given any such proof of being possessed either of that adequate amount of varied learning or of that clear and independent power of thought and expression which might lead the generality of their neighbours to attach any importance to aught they might either do or say.

As a specimen of what we refer to, and one which may well be quoted because it is, we had almost said, of course, specially arrogant and specially absurd, we give the following from the "Bystander," for November: "Principal Caven says we must have dogma. We hope the distinguished theologian means doctrine. Doctrine, of course, we must have; no religion, not even that of Swedenborg or Madame Guyon, can consist of mere emotion or aspiration without any intellectual belief. But dogma, which is unreason imposed by ecclesiastical authority, may, it is to be hoped, be laid aside, because it forms a fatal obstacle to that union of the Christian Churches towards which the hearts and minds of the best and wisest Christians are evidently turning. The grand example of dogma is the Athanasian creed."

Now all this is just the very perfection of an easy, jaunty, patronizing superciliousness which can settle