

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

PRESBYTERIAN COLDNESS.

MR. EDITOR,—For some time I have had occasion to travel considerably in several parts of our "fair Dominion," and under circumstances which have afforded me opportunities of making some observations in regard to religious matters, and of comparing different denominations. Being a Presbyterian, I have paid some attention to our own Church; and while, on the whole, I have become more attached to it than ever, I have observed some points of weakness which require to be remedied, and which other denominations regard as characteristic of the Presbyterian Church. One of these is the "coldness," or lack of manifestation of friendly feeling, which seems to pervade many congregations of our Church—first, towards each other; and second, towards those who are outside of our fold. This is often painfully noticeable in the indifference manifested toward strangers. To illustrate this point, take the following: Not long ago I arrived at a respectable village in the county of P— on a Saturday afternoon. I was an entire stranger in the place, and on Sabbath morning learned that there was a Presbyterian church in the village; also two other Protestant places of worship. The morning was very wet, and at the proper time I proceeded to the Presbyterian church. Arriving at the door, I stepped inside the vestibule, expecting that some person would be so kind as to conduct me to a seat. I was early, and stood waiting for more than a quarter of an hour. People passed in—old and young, male and female. The only recognition which I received was that several of them stopped in passing and gazed at me with an expression of countenance which seemed to ask some of the following questions: Who are you? What do you want? What right have you in this church? I endured the ordeal as well as possible till the pastor had entered; then summoned sufficient courage to ask a gentleman to show me a seat, which I am happy to say he did. Now, sir, I have had this sort of experience in many places; and although it has but little effect upon my regard for or attachment to our Church, its results in the case of many are to dispose them to avoid our places of worship. This is especially true of young people who come strangers to a new city, town, or village, and it may be are not members of any Church. They are often influenced largely by the treatment which they receive during the first few weeks; and that Church which shows them most kindness and friendship is likely to secure them.

Not long ago, a young lady, the daughter of Presbyterian parents, told me that as soon as she shall be at liberty to choose for herself she intends to join the Methodists, and on my inquiring the reason she said: "Well, the Presbyterians are so cold. We came to H— three years ago, and I attended St. A—'s Church for about two years. During all that time scarcely anyone belonging to the congregation ever spoke to me. Many of them are wealthy, and as stiff and cold as icebergs."

A most amiable and excellent young man told me that he had always attended the Presbyterian Church till he left his father's house. He then went to a certain town to attend the High School, and there neither minister nor people manifested any regard for him, took no interest in him, and feeling it keenly he began to worship with the Methodists, who from the very first treated him with kindly attention. The result has been that he is now "a good Methodist." Many such cases could easily be given, all tending to demonstrate that ministers and people need to display more of that Christian kindness and regard for one another, and more especially for those who are outside the pale of the Church or come among them as strangers, which forms an important factor in making them "epistles known and read of men."

A RAMBLER.

LIMITED TERMS OF SERVICE OF ELDERS.

MR. EDITOR,—In THE PRESBYTERIAN of August 16th there appears a paragraph, suggesting the propriety of appointing elders for a limited term instead of for an indefinite period, as is the usual practice, on the ground that after a protracted period of service their influence for good begins to wane. This method is open to objection on many accounts. In the scriptural sense

of the term, the name *elder* is suggestive of mature years and judgment, as well as experience in the divine life; and it is none of the most favourable indications of spiritual prosperity when congregations become impatient of restraints which meet them from these sources.

Certain it is that no amount of *push* will compensate for the absence of such qualities; and if, in the case of any of the congregations of our Church, the zeal of the membership has shot so far ahead of the elders whom they or their fathers elected to office twenty or thirty years ago, as to entitle them to be regarded as "nuisances or something worse," it is high time inquiry were made in what direction men and matters are drifting. On investigation it will be found that, as a rule, elders are the first to put their hands to the various departments of Christian work undertaken by the Church; and that in nine-tenths of the cases where their official presence is felt to be an incubus of the nature described, the true ground of complaint turns out to be their disapprobation of some pet scheme of self-aggrandizement—such, for example, as the erection of Church buildings in a style and at an expense which is sure to paralyze their energies for years to come; or, perchance, their refusal to give countenance to frivolous Church amusements, so rife at the present day. That there are individual cases of inefficiency among elders is admitted; but is that a sufficient reason why the onus of unfaithfulness should be shouldered upon all, in the way indicated by the proposal under consideration?

It is equally difficult to see how, by appearing at stated periods at the bar of congregations for judgment by re-election or rejection, elders would be stimulated to greater faithfulness. Instead of honest labour done for and in obedience to the Master, the chances are that the worst possible features of congregationalism would be realized, in the shape of services performed in servile obedience to the popular wish, by men ambitious of no higher reward than the exercise of a little brief authority.

In the case of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, whose practice in regard to the matter under consideration is held up for our imitation, we see the evil effects of a too liberal homage rendered to popular opinion in spiritual affairs; for not only do we find elders on short terms of service, but ministers as well, in the character of "stated supply." When we find a practice in operation, gradually but surely supplanting what we believe to be the only scriptural method of Church government, by the introduction of something else, not even the *imprimatur* of such men as Miller, or Alexander, or Hodge will convince us that it is right. *Vox populi vox Dei* may suit very well the exigencies of the passing hour in matters pertaining to civil rule; but I confess to an unconquerable feeling of aversion to seeing services done in the name and by the authority of Christ, with those who render them, submitted to any such tribunal for judgment.

Divine wisdom has seen meet to authorize proper judicatories for the purpose of dealing with all such matters, and before these courts Church members ought to lodge their complaints in regard to the character and conduct of office-bearers when they descend so low as to become "nuisances."

The calm consideration and faithful treatment such cases would there receive would not likely issue in anything prejudicial to the interests of truth and purity.

W. T.

TENDENCY OF METHODISTS TO EPISCOPACY.

[The following has been in our hands for several months; but as the matter to which it refers is still under discussion among our Methodist brethren, its publication even at this late hour may not be regarded as untimely.—ED. C. P.]

MR. EDITOR,—It has been reported in the newspapers that some influential members of the Methodist Church in Canada have proposed that three bishops should be chosen for life at the next meeting of Conference. In looking over some old pamphlets, I have happened on the following statements and the accompanying letter from John Wesley. It is curious that Mr. Wesley refers in his letter to the Presbyterians as not furnishing a sufficient model for the guidance of Methodists. Perhaps the Methodists of Canada may at the present day find among the Canadian Presbyterians a more decided spirit of resistance to Episcopal control, and may therefore feel more disposed to ally themselves with Presbytery than with

Episcopacy. To introduce the life-authority of bishops at present into the Methodist Church of Canada would be a specimen of advancing backwards.

In the Minutes of the American Conference of 1784-85, there are seventy-six questions with their answers, of which the following question with its answer is the 3rd.—"As the ecclesiastical as well as civil affairs of the United States have passed through a very considerable change by the Revolution, what plan of Church government shall we hereafter pursue?"

ANS.—"We will form ourselves into an Episcopal Church, under the direction of superintendents, elders, deacons, and helpers, according to the forms of ordination annexed to our liturgy, and the form of discipline set forth in these Minutes."

As soon as Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury had announced themselves bishops in the Minutes of Conference, Mr. Wesley wrote to Mr. Asbury the following letter (see Moore's "Life of Wesley," Vol. II., p. 286).

W. HAMILTON.

"There is, indeed, a wide difference between the relation wherein you stand to the Americans and the relation wherein I stand to all the Methodists. You are the elder brother of the American Methodists; I am, under God, the father of the whole family. Therefore I naturally care for you all in a manner no other person can do. Therefore I in a measure provide for you all; for the supplies which Dr. Coke provides for you, he could not provide were it not for me—were it not that I not only permit him to collect, but support him in so doing.

"But in one point, my dear brother, I am afraid both the Doctor and you differ from me. I study to be little; you study to be great. I creep; you strut along. I formed a school; you, a college. Nay, and call it after your own name! O beware! Do not seek to be something! Let me be nothing, and Christ be all in all.

"One instance of this your greatness has given me great concern. How can you—how dare you suffer yourself to be called a bishop? I shudder—I start at the very thought. Men may call me a knave, or a fool, or a rascal, or a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never, by my consent, call me a bishop! For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this! Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better. Thus, my dear Franky, I have told you all that is in my heart; and let this, when I am no more seen, bear witness how sincerely I am your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN WESLEY.

"London, September 20th, 1788."

KNOX COLLEGE ENDOWMENT.

MR. EDITOR,—The following letter speaks for itself:

Hamilton, Aug. 4, 1882.

"DEAR SIR,—I purpose to give, as early as arrangements are requiring it, \$1,000 toward endowment of Knox College; but not knowing the best shape in which to put this advance, will you please give me your views on the subject? . . . Kindly let me know, and the sum shall be at the service of the College Board at once. Yours truly,

JAMES WALKER.

"Rev. Wm. Burns, Toronto."

The sequel to this note is contained in another to Rev. Dr. Reid, Treasurer of the Church, enclosing a cheque for the amount—one thousand dollars. Mr. Walker evidently believes in the motto, "He gives twice who gives quickly."

May this beginning of the endowment movement have a prompt and numerous following, not only in Hamilton, but elsewhere, so that our good old Knox College may be fully on a par with the other institutions of the Church.

WM. BURNS.

THE GRAND OLD PSALMS.

MR. EDITOR,—Only the Scotch version of the Psalms was sung at the last Presbyterian Council. The New York "Independent" calls that part of the exercises "a Unitarian service of song." The Toronto "Christian Guardian" calls that remark "a capital hit."

An acquaintance of mine—a very pious Methodist lady—told me the other day that she attended the last communion service in the Presbyterian Church at Miramichi. It was to her a blessed season, and this, she said, was in no small degree owing, instrumentally, to the Psalms of the old Scottish version then sung.

Brother Dawart! what think you of that?
Metis, Que.

T. F.