

## Our Contributors.

### A SHORT ADDRESS TO THOSE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE PAST.

BY KNOXONIAN.

One day seven years ago you took your dinner. It may have been a very good meal; but it does not strengthen you for this afternoon. If you tried to work this afternoon on the strength of that seven-year-old meal you would not feel very frisky by the time sunset came round. A seven-year-old meal does not satisfy one's appetite or brace one's nerves or keep one's temper sweet or put one in good working trim. A seven-year-old meal may have been good for all practical purposes at the time it was taken but it is a failure at the end of seven years. "Wife, is the dinner ready?" you sometimes say in accents not quite so sweet as those in which you used to address that excellent lady in courting days. What would you think if she sweetly replied: "My dear, I gave you dinner seven years ago?"

When you came out to this country you wore on Sabbath a blue swallow-tailed coat with brass buttons. Your head—perhaps a rather hard one—was adorned with a stove-pipe hat nearly two feet long. You remember the old hat and coat. You would hardly put them on now if wearing them one Sabbath elected your favourite candidate or raised the price of wheat to a dollar a bushel. Your wife wisely put the coat into a rag carpet. The children gathered chips in your venerable tile for years. You wear good Canadian tweed now without such adornments as brass buttons. You are quite a modern man so far as your personal appearance is concerned.

Now why should a good sensible man like you try to live on past religious experiences? To suppose that your soul can prosper on the experiences of twenty years ago is not more reasonable than to expect that your body will be sustained by the food you consumed twenty years ago. Now let us come to close quarters on this question and examine some of the sayings which indicate that people are trying to live on old religious experiences.

"We used to belong to a large and influential congregation." Well, what of it? Perhaps the only reason in the world why the congregation was large was because nearly all the people in that community were Presbyterians. Nobody may have deserved any credit because the congregation had a large membership. The people were there and they simply went to their own Church. Perhaps the population was growing rapidly and the congregation grew along with it. Possibly it grew *in spite of* inefficiency. Such things do sometimes happen. Be that as it may, there is a painful contrast between your present and your past ecclesiastical surroundings. Perhaps you now worship in a mission station or small congregation that has hard work to keep in existence. Well, the best way for you to show that the large congregation did you good is to work heartily, loyally, hopefully, prayerfully in the small one. Work and pray so that everybody will say: "It is easily seen that man got a good church training wherever he was brought up." That is the right way to do credit to the old Church at home. If you don't do anything but talk about the old church, sensible people will conclude the old church never did you much good. Some people may even hint that you are no great credit. Show how much the large congregation did for you by helping on the new one.

"We used to sit under a very able minister." That certainly was a very great privilege. Next to godly parents an able, earnest Gospel minister is perhaps the greatest blessing. Your old minister whose voice you can still hear has gone to his reward. The Master called him up higher. Could he come down and speak to you again about church matters what do you think he would say? If he was the man you describe him to have been, almost the first thing he would ask you is whether you are helping your present minister. And if you told him you never could listen to anybody since he left he would feel heartily ashamed of you. He would tell you he was very much disappointed in you, as he had hoped that you would grow up a warm-hearted, working Christian, giving a helping hand to every good cause but especially to your pastor. That is exactly what the old veteran would say if he was the kind of a man you say he was. Oh, ye men who live in the past, will you ever learn

that the best way to honour the memory of your old minister is to help the new one? Will speaking about McDonald of Ferintosh help on the good cause in Canada? Did the Gospel that McDonald of Ferintosh preached to you turn you into a sour, sneering faultfinder? Did the ministry of the Apostle of the North merely make you a crank? If so, you are no credit to the Apostle of the North and the sooner you drop his honoured name the better. Some of you used to hear the sainted McCheyne, did you? Then show McCheyne's spirit. The most cranked, crooked, stubborn, conceited, useless piece of Presbyterian clay I ever knew used to begin a diet of sneering and fault-finding many years ago by piously observing that he "used to hear McCheyne." I hope he has more of McCheyne's spirit now, though it is not very likely. There is a man somewhere in this country who, when under influences more spirituous than spiritual, always boasts that he used to "sit under Chalmers," and could never listen to anybody since. If Thomas Chalmers could revisit this sphere he would not feel particularly proud of that man. Fancy a man saying that he used to sit under Chalmers or Guthrie or Candlish or Cooke or Edgar or Norman McLeod or McDonald of Ferintosh, or some other great preacher, and then showing how much these preachers did for him by giving ten cents to send the Gospel they preached to the heathen!

"We used to have very impressive Communion seasons in the good old days. We never have such refreshing seasons now." This is a complaint quite frequently heard. Making all due allowance for the fact that the Lord's Supper used to be dispensed but once a year in many congregations, and that it is now dispensed in many every quarter, there may still be some ground for this complaint. It is a fact that the week-day services are fewer in number and do not seem to be considered so important as they once were. But whose is the fault? If the people will not attend two services would they attend six? It has never been shown that a session lessened the number if the people attended. When you say that Communion services are not so impressive as they were, may not the change be in *you*? When did these solemn occasions make such a deep impression upon you? Was it not when you became a Christian and your heart was warm, your zeal ardent, your love strong? Instead of growing in grace you have been growing backward spiritually and now you blame the Church for your spiritual declension. One thing is clear. There is no reason why a Communion season should not be as profitable now as Communion seasons ever were. Can it be possible that some ministers who have no sympathy with the Presbyterian Church life slight the ordinance? The minister who does so is unfit for the Presbyterian service and should never have had a place in the Church.

"Preaching has not the fervour and power now that it had in the past." This complaint is becoming painfully general. Some of the best people we have speak more of the sermons they heard thirty years ago than of sermons they now hear from some who are called "leading men in the Church," and rate themselves so. But this question must be left over for another address.

Remember, you good people who try to live in the past, that the essentials are everywhere and always the same. The Sabbath is the same. The Bible is the same. The Gospel is the same. The promises are the same. Stop groaning about the past and try to make the present better. There is no reward for a man who can do no better work than speak about his grandfather.

### PRESBYTERIANISM IN ENGLAND.

#### ITS REVIVAL AND PRESENT POSITION.

The Synod of the Presbyterian Church in England, properly so-called, was organized in 1836. An effort to form a Synod had been made in Northumberland in 1828-9, but that Synod met only twice. Still it was the herald of the auspicious Synodal Union of 1836, which constituted an independent and self-governing Presbyterian Church upon English soil, and at the same time notified to the world that after the lapse of three centuries the work of Knox in England, as father and founder of English Presbyterianism, was resumed by men who were almost all his sons by national as well as ecclesiastical lineage.

Notwithstanding the dreary eclipse of presbytery in England during last century, referred to in a for-

mer letter, there still remained a succession of evangelical ministers in the Northern Counties, particularly Northumberland. Early in this century these men sought sympathy and aid from the Church of Scotland, in the hope of securing the

RESTORATION OF PRESBYTERIAN GOVERNMENT and discipline south of the Tweed. It was in consequence of this the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland advised the English Presbyterians to organize a synod of their own, which they did, as stated above, in 1836, when they adopted the Westminster Standards as their guide in doctrine, discipline, government and worship.

The Presbyteries which united to form this first Synod were those of Lancashire and the North-West of England, comprising twelve congregations. Other Presbyteries were afterwards admitted as constituent members, the ministers and elders signing the Confession of Faith and formulæ, and submitting to the jurisdiction of the Synod. Up to 1844 the title of the Church was: "The Presbyterian Church of England in connection with the Church of Scotland"—a connection which was merely nominal, however. In that year the Synod passed an Act declaring their Church—at that time composed of sixty-three congregations—to be independent, and after that they entered into friendly relationship with the Church of Scotland.

In 1845 Dr. Merle d'Aubigné, of Geneva, visited England and cheered and stimulated the youthful Church by saying that it had a mission in England. "I believe," said he, "in the progress of presbytery. I am convinced that the principle underlying it is progressing and will progress. All the other churches see that we occupy a middle place." The great thing now needed was *visibility*. Dr. Cunningham had already told them so, and they soon began to supply the want. They had opened a theological college for the education of ministers the previous year. In May, 1845, appeared the first number of the

"ENGLISH PRESBYTERIAN MESSENGER," a monthly organ of the Church. The first three numbers were edited by Dr. James Hamilton, the first number containing from his pen a short article from which a few lines may be here extracted:

READER,—Your eye has alighted on the first line of the first periodical of the Presbyterian Church of England. It is only now that our Church can be considered as effectively re-organized, and now for the first time, after the supineness of a century, that she is addressing herself to the great work which God has given her to do. Though a day of small things, ours is a day of great opportunities; and the blessing which we feel that we ourselves have received, we would thankfully take as a token that God designs to make us a blessing to others. Iron sharpeneth iron, and mutual intercourse is essential to the zeal and success of churches. Hitherto the English Presbyterians have not only dwelt alone, and not been numbered among neighbour churches, but we have been strangely secluded from ourselves. Interesting events have happened in various localities; but, except from a casual paragraph in a Scotch or provincial newspaper, we had no hint of what was transpiring. It is one symptom of returning vigour that an identity of interest and a community of feeling are spreading through the body, and that our various congregations are more willing to help one another, and more anxious to hear of one another's welfare, than in the days of selfishness and isolation now (we trust) for ever gone.

#### A FOREIGN MISSION

was practically commenced in 1847, when the Rev. W. C. Burns, still remembered by many in Canada from the interesting visit he made, was sent out to China, as the first missionary from the English Presbyterian Church, the results of which we shall see by-and-by.

In 1863 Dr. Hamilton undertook the task of raising the sum of £25,000 to pay off the debt upon church buildings then existing; and in a few months he not only raised the sum needed, but the additional sum of £60,000, which was spent in

#### BUILDING NEW CHURCHES.

This proved that there was real vitality in the infant Church—a vitality which has since made itself increasingly manifest in most of the large towns of England.

In the North of England evangelical Presbyterianism was largely promoted by the deliverance from