

in many congregations, it was a virtual nullity, if not a positive nuisance.

There was a period in the history of our Church, in the parent country, when the session was the "glory in the midst" of every congregation—when its deliberations were regarded with intense interest, and its decisions received with profound respect. It constituted a "moral court," through the individual and combined influence of which, a zealous pastor could effect any good object on which "he had set his heart, and of the scrutiny of which a slothful pastor stood in salutary dread. Pastors and Elders mutually acted and reacted on each other—each keeping the other at his work—and between both, the people were instructed—the wanderer reclaimed—the vicious controlled, and sin and folly were reformed and hid their heads." This bright epoch was succeeded by an age of darkness and death, when a cold, withering modernism had the ascendancy. Then the blossoms of piety were nipped—the axe was laid to the root of this and every other useful institution—and the few who remained faithful to Christ's crown and covenant, were hid like the seven thousand in Israel, in the days of Elijah—or sent and wept like the captive harpers by the rivers of Babylon—all around there reigned the stagnation of the Dead Sea, without the pervading heaven of pure religion and undefiled, to neutralize the noxious vapours it exhaled.

For thirty or forty years there were no Ruling Elders at all in many congregations—the Minister being allowed by the Presbytery to which he belonged, to assume permanently as assessors, certain neighbouring ministers, to co-operate with himself, in the management of congregational affairs. The popular voice was effectually silenced—the veto of a reclaiming congregation was treated with derision. Happily this dark age has been buried in the sepulchre of the past. The day has begun to break—the shadows to flee away. For a quarter of a century at least, symptoms have been presented of a time of refreshing. Our Church, aroused from her protracted slumbers, has shaken herself from the dust, loosed herself from the bands of her neck, and responded to the summons of her presiding king—"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."—Is. lli. 1.

One evidence of the Church being in a progressive rather than a retrograde condition, has been the increasing interest the subject of the Ruling Eldership has excited, and the growing desire that is evinced for its elevation in public esteem. It is as yet, however, but the day of small things, and all boasting is certainly excluded. We are far from supposing that correct views are universally prevalent respecting the nature and responsibilities of the Eldership—or that every one called to it can give a conscientious Amen to the sentiment of our text—"I magnify mine office."

Even in this age of remarkable progress and special privilege, there are many who, in regard to the office of Elder, fail to rise from the secular to the spiritual element—who fancy that it consists in a mechanical going through of certain stereotyped forms, and that it has to do exclusively with the things seen and temporal:—they have not their senses exercised to discern its spiritual bearings, and the intimate relation in which it stands to the things unseen and eternal. A consideration of the Elder's duties, in so far as these may be gathered from the pages of the Bible and the practice of the Church, may serve to confirm the good resolutions of any who rule well—to stimulate the flagging energies of any who have grown weary in well doing—and in general, to "magnify the office" in the estimate of us all.

I. There are certain primary duties lying on the very surface, which are not confined to the

Elder in the range of their obligation, but which, from the official station which he fills, are peculiarly incumbent upon him.

In the event of an Elder being the head of a family, he is especially called upon to be "faithful in all his house." He must form the resolution of Joshua, "as for me, &c., and act on the noble principle of Abraham, who commanded his household and his servants after him, so that they knew the Lord." With a due admixture of tenderness and firmness, should the reins of parental government be held, so that youthful excesses may be checked, laxity of morals be avoided, and even the extremities of the domestic circle experience the controlling and constraining influence of his pervading presence.

Let an Elder's children be found running wild throughout the community, ranking as ringleaders in every disturbance of which the neighborhood is the scene, dismissed from school, or deprived of a situation for improper behaviour, it causes serious reflections to be cast on the Elder himself, and entails grievous injury on the religion he professes and the office he fills. Poor, old, heart-broken Eli, stands forth on the canvas of scripture biography, a melancholy specimen of an over-indulgent parent. He had not tact nor decision enough to keep his children in order. While he was engrossed with his official duties, they, breaking asunder the cords of parental restraint, which were yielding as the withs of Samson, were frequenting the haunts of vice, and openly glorying in their shame. Occasionally he reproved, rebuked and exhorted, but it was in such a hesitating, irresolute tone, as entirely to blunt its edge, and to draw mockery only from the lips of these dissolute youths. And what was the consequence? By their evil deeds they counteracted all the good the exemplary deportment and faithful services of their father might have accomplished. We are not so foolish as to assert, that even with the most judicious parental oversight, children may not sometimes go astray. Ishmael, in the family of Abraham, Esau in that of Isaac, the majority in that of Jacob, Nadab and Abihu in the family of Aaron, and Absalom in the family of David, all rise up as a practical refutation of such a notion. Still, true it is, that a father's influence, if prudently exercised, cannot fail to encompass his offspring with a salutary chain, and that like parent like children, will as generally hold good as like priest like people. One of the very first duties then devolving on an Elder, is to train up his children in the way they should go. If he be unfaithful in that which is least, how can he be expected to be faithful in that which is greater? If he rule not well in the more limited, what reason have we to expect he will do so in the more enlarged circle? Hence, Paul lays it down as a fixed principle, that when a man is causelessly neglectful of discipline in his family, he is virtually disqualified for filling the office of an Elder. An Elder, as he states it, must be "one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity: for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"—1 Tim. iii. 2.

According to the system at present existing, by which no pecuniary compensation is given to the ruling Elder for his services, he must needs, generally speaking, be engaged in some worldly occupation, and may say with the apostolic tent-maker, "these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that are with me." This opens up a distinct class of duties peculiarly binding on the Elder in common with others. In the business of life, as in the bosom of the family, he is bound to walk circumspectly.

Undoubtedly an exemplary diligence should be displayed. Rust must not be permitted to gather on the wheels, or weeds to grow upon the path of industry. He ought to have all his wits about him, so as not to be duped by the artifice of the impostor, or earn the unenviable notoriety of being the worst of his trade. Still he ought not to engage in business with such intense eagerness,

as to allow the duties of the family and of the Church to lie neglected, or to convey the impression, that instead of seeking first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, all other things occupy the uppermost seat. He should avoid the very appearance of every thing that would tend to place his name side by side with Demetrius, whose heart was absorbed in the silver shaines, or of Demas, who loved this present world. Nothing can be more adverse to the reputation of a professor of religion, than to get the name of being an astute man—a sharper—one bent, at all hazards, on making rich—who would scurry down to the lowest possible step in the scale of prices—exact the uttermost farthing in a bargain, and insist on a rigid adherence to the minutest item in an account. Such keen struggling for gain, deals a death blow to godliness. And if so injurious in the case of a private member, how much more in the case of an Elder of the Church, who, in the virtue of his office, stands as a pillar in the temple of our God. It becomes every Elder to attend to his calling as Jesus did, when men jeeringly said, "Is not this the carpenter?" and as Paul did, when he manufactured tents. It becomes him to exemplify a similar abstractedness from earth—to carry the principles he professes in their native vigour and freshness—to the bench of labour, or the mart of commerce. A mass of worldly duties may be accumulated around: but grace from above should leaven the whole lump.

There are many additional duties that devolve on Elders in common with others. These will naturally suggest themselves to the thoughtful mind; and some of them may afterwards be adverted to, when we come to speak of the Elder's qualifications.

(To be continued.)

ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE ELECTION OF DEACONS.

By the Rev. M. Y. STARR, Dundas.

What regards the management of the outward affairs of a church or congregation, is too apt to be underrated in its importance, and very often through want of consideration by those who have sincerely at heart the interests of religion—deeply concerned about the purity and the spiritual interests of the church, they are apt to keep their view so closely fixed upon this end, and the spiritual agency essential for its attainment, as to forget the necessity, by the appointment of God, of the employment of outward means; and that while the Holy Spirit is the only source of spiritual life in a church, that his agency, being alike promised and communicated through ordained channels, the grace cannot be expected unless these channels be sought and used. Just as the Holy Spirit is the only effective agent in man's conversion and moral regeneration, while yet God has inseparably connected the accomplishment of these ends with the use of means—such as the reading of and meditating upon the word—the believer's reception and application of the truth—attendance upon the preaching of the word and the ordinances of God's House—watching and prayer. They that receive the offered grace must be in the use of the enjoined means. The Spirit savingly enlightens and prepares the heart to receive the truth, but in order to this the word must be read and studied, and the preaching of the word given heed to. Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from above; but to receive we must ask in prayer—to find we must seek—to have the door opened we must knock. Why is it that men do not receive? even because they ask not, or ask amiss. Now the same thing holds true in regard to the church. God works out, even the highest spiritual objects by outward means. Through these his promises are made—through these, by his gracious agency, are they accomplished—the right construction and the effective ordering of