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## The Sinner's Refuge.

I CANNOT tell where I am drifting, drifting,  
    Adown the stream ;  
Life's fickle sands are slowly sifting, sifting,  
    A changing dream.  
Thoughts, sweet and bitter, through me are surging, flooding,  
Now soul-inspiring, now dark gloom foreboding ;  
Oh, to be free from all this vain regretting  
    Of errors past ;  
Oh, for the jewel lost from out its setting,  
    And from me cast !  
Oh, for a balm to heal a mind diseased,  
Oh, for protection from a God displeased.  
Where shall I flee, from all this sin and care,  
What refuge seek—the Saviour's cross up there ?  
Lo ! comes the answer, in a heavenly strain,  
"Have Faith and thou shalt yet be born again.  
There is no other one to whom beholden,  
Through Christ our Lord, we tread the stairway golden  
If thou wilt only trust, obey believe,  
Thy way-worn soul He'll pardon, cleanse, receive."

F. J. E.

TORONTO, Canada, Jan., 1874.

## Duties of the Eldership.

NO office in the Presbyterian Church is of greater antiquity, or of more honor than that of the ruling eldership. Those holding it are chosen men, solemnly set apart to sacred service. They are not called to devote their lives to teaching authoritatively, and to the administration of the sacraments, as are the ministers of our Lord Jesus Christ; but they are their equals and co-laborers in the maintenance of sound doctrine and discipline in the Church. It is theirs "to rule well"—to supervise and govern in God's house. They are the custodians of the purity, peace and welfare of Christ's kingdom. They are entrusted with a high responsibility. They are required to attend to whatever relates to the instruction, edification and prosperity of the people over whom God has made them overseers.

Their duties are limited, being defined by their distinctive title—spiritual rulers. It is not given to them to employ secular weapons or aids, in vindication of their authority, or against the offenders of moral law. They handle no carnal instruments. They act for Christ, in His name, under His regulations, and according to His prescribed order. As respects civil relations, they are nothing more than ordinary citizens, but in their ecclesiastical relations they stand in God's stead, are invested with moral power and endued with divine authority to pronounce judgment upon all matters within their constitutional and scriptural jurisdiction, consult about, and to take action in regard to all affairs that come before them in a lawful manner.

More particularly viewed, their duties are both public and private, as respects those which are more open and formal, they constitute a judicial Court, or Church

Session. In this capacity they are counsellors, administrators and adjudicators. It devolves upon them to guard carefully the young committed to their oversight, following them with their advice, admonition, prayers and help. They must converse with the serious, comfort the afflicted, visit and pray with the sick, encourage the desponding, rescue the tempted, reprove the careless, and restore the backsliding. They are to render all needful assistance in sustaining and conducting devotional meetings, leading in prayer, and, when necessary, explaining the Scriptures or offering a word of exhortation. In brief, they must do by speech, example and influence, whatever will be beneficial for the congregation, honorable to their station, and promotive of the glory of Him whom they represent. This may sound old-fashioned, or even new, to some of our modern elders, who seem to think their duty is ended when they attend the meeting of the session with more or less regularity, and assist in the distribution of the sacramental elements; but it is well to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance, and to indicate what a blessed mission is theirs if they will only awake to the true conception of what their office means and requires, and do their utmost, with the divine help, to discharge its functions in the spirit of their Lord, and out of love to the souls of all placed under their care.

No; do their duties end with the specifications mentioned. At such times, and in such ways, as the Constitution of the Church prescribes, they are to sit as members of its higher judicatories, and to decide and act in a legislative and judicial capacity, as the case may be. Here their voice and vote are as free and decisive as those of the most famous divines. They have equal privileges, rights and powers in Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly with their ministerial brethren.

In the light of these considerations, their position is most responsible. To meet its demands requires study, care, devotion, reflection, prudence, and, above all, special grace. It may well tax the energies and resources of the greatest and best of Christ's servants. It is not to be assumed in a trifling, flippant, careless manner, but entered upon with seriousness, ardor and consecration.

The value of this sacred office cannot well be over-estimated. It should never be lightly esteemed. It should hold high place in the regard of all who exercise it, and of all who are subject to it. It has been of immense advantage to our Church in past generations, conserving the purity of truth and conduct, and advancing the kingdom of Christ. He who honorably, acceptably and usefully fills it does grand and noble work.

"That little children should play at the foot of the ladder between heaven and earth, which was let down at Bethlehem and is never again to be drawn up, is surely the Master's mind.—*British Weekly*