

THE PRESBYTERIAN.

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PROTESTANTS have usually claimed the right of discussing freely and fairly all matters on which differences of opinion may arise, and such subjects as may be reasonably supposed to come within the scope of such a publication as the *Presbyterian*, can scarcely with justice be excepted from this rule. Theoretically this right of free discussion is admitted, and in an article in a former volume we pointed clearly enough, we believe, the limits within which such discussions should be confined, and the amount of responsibility resting with the editor, in reference to communications of a controversial character. The fact that the *Presbyterian* is the only Journal specially connected with our Church, gives so much the stronger reason why its different members and adherents should be allowed liberty, within such bounds as will naturally suggest themselves to men of sense, to set forth their views on topics connected with the government or even, it may be, the modes of worship of the Church. One good effect of this liberty we pointed out to be the dispelling of prejudice and error, and in many cases the refutation by the very publication of the letters themselves of the fallacies, never so clearly seen as when put down in black and white and in such form as the writers could have an opportunity of seeing to what conclusion their arguments would legitimately lead. Of such subjects are the private administration of the Lord's Supper; the adoption of set forms of prayers; the use of instrumental music in public worship; the keeping of holidays in addition to the Lord's Day, besides others of more or less importance. We need scarcely repeat that while giving insertion to letters or communications discussing subjects of this kind there can not be taken for granted any editorial responsibility, that is, any be-

lief that the views of correspondents are such as are approved of and recommended for adoption. All, it is clear, cannot receive editorial sanction, both sides having liberty of discussion, and should only such articles be inserted as are in unison with the views of the editor, there would be very serious and just cause for complaint that the Church paper had become the mere mouth piece of a particular section who stifled all utterances displeasing to them, however wide spread might be the feeling which prompted those who sought to make public their opinions and desires for a change or their wish to prevent change in any particular respect. Even were there two or three journals representing different parties within our Church we would still consider it our duty to deal justly by correspondents who might desire to combat the opinions which in that case we might be supposed to support. How much stronger, then, does this reason become when there is but one medium of communication between the members of all shades of opinion, in whose pages each ought to be sure of obtaining admission and of having his views and opinions fairly presented to his brethren in his own words without garbling or misrepresentation.

We had thought this was so fully explained on previous occasions that there would have been no necessity to recur to this subject. We might, as is the practice in some journals, have a preface to each letter or communication inserted, giving warning that we are not responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents. But among a class of readers so intelligent as those which we believe we have the happiness to possess, we have always considered such a notice to be a needless precaution. We regret exceedingly to have had occasion to refer to this subject, more on account of the reason