

POETRY.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE YEAR.

Come—let us hail the birth  
Of the approaching year;  
Not with the voice of noisy mirth,  
But with a grateful tear.

Our heavenly Father bless  
For all his love and care;  
Lift up to Him, with lowliness,  
The voice of contrite prayer.

Though sometimes grief's dark shade,  
Hath shed its gloom around;  
His loving-kindness still hath made  
Our comforts to abound.

Far more than our deserts  
Have they—when fewest—proved,  
Yet seldom have our wayward hearts  
Aright the Giver loved.

To creature-comforts prone,  
They cling in close embrace,  
While He, who claims them for his own,  
Can hardly find a place.

Yet with unwearied zeal,  
And love that changeth not,  
He watches o'er his children's weal,  
Who have Him thus forgot.

Shall we then still refuse  
Thy servants, Lord, to be?  
And still an earthly portion choose  
In preference to Thee?

ANNE.

CORRESPONDENCE.

For the Guardian.

ON THE UNION AMONG PRESBYTERIANS.

LETTER II.

MESSRS. EDITORS,

In my last, I took a short view of the state of the Presbyterian Church at its formation in this province, and pointed out the kind of alliance existing between that branch of the church and the parent church. From its being denominated a branch of the Church of Scotland, there must surely be some connexion between the branch, and the trunk from which it springs.

The more immediate object of the present communication, is to ascertain by hypothesis, conjecture, or expressed statement, what may be the reasons why the Presbyterians of Nova Scotia, do not unite with the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. And here, I must confess, that the reasons must exist in imagination more than in reality. At any rate, our friends have not favoured us with any specific reasons why they do not unite with us, and if their objections were very weighty, they would surely have brought them forward. Whatever objections our seceding friends might have against the Church of Scotland, as by law established in Scotland; these objections cannot hold here, where there is no established church; and you have already given us in your journal, an account of the kind of control which the church at home claims in this and other colonies over us. It is the jurisdiction of kindness and gentleness, the control which a nursing mother would exercise over her children, a kindly supremacy to which no man who is a Christian indeed, would for one moment object. She wishes to form and nurture our infant congregations, by affording them aid in various ways,—she wishes to aid our ministers from the bounty of her Christian people,—she wishes to afford counsel and advice, as to the best means of upholding a permanent ministry, in the country in her connection, and she rightfully considers herself entitled and bound to tender counsel, admonition, exhortation, and it may be reproof, to licentiates and ministers, because it is in virtue of her commission they exercise their functions; and if disobedient to her constituted church courts, to subject them to censure, or deprive them of their ecclesiastical status in her communion.

And is there aught in all this, to prevent men who outwardly profess to conform to her standards from entering into communion with her. She has opened her portals at home to her seceding friends, who have adhered to their original principles of secession, and by her noble example, she calls upon us to "go and do likewise;" and we have done so; and publicly given our friends an opportunity to return to the bosom of their deserted mother, by the simple test of a bona fide subscription, of what we and the seceders hold to be the very basis of Presbyterianism, the "Westminster Confession of Faith." If seceders in this country refuse to join us on these terms, it is because

they do not wish to uphold the Presbyterianism of the Church of Scotland, but some new modelled form of it of their own creation, some independent Presbyterian Church, which may do with the Confession of Faith what she pleases, irrespective of jurisdiction or control from any church on earth; but to fluctuate and change with the times, and to yield to every opinion of latitudinarianism, which the unguardedness of human opinion may require.

We have heard indeed of one reason, why the Presbyterians of Nova Scotia should not join the communion of the Church of Scotland, and from its extraordinary character, it deserves a passing remark. It is said that instead of their joining us, we should rather join them, as having priority in time, more influence, wealth and respectability in the province; for we Ministers of the Church of Scotland came only at the ninth hour of the day. If this reason be good for any thing, it is valuable only to shew us the estimation in which we are held, by our friends of the Secession Church. It proceeds on the supposition, that the moment we set foot on Nova Scotia ground, we were at liberty to throw our ordination vows to the winds, and join any body of professing Presbyterians, to be found in the country, regardless of our connexion with the Church of Scotland. But we are not so at liberty to do as we please. We are bound as Licentiates and ordained Ministers, to promote the cause of that church where providence may order our lot; and if we do otherwise, we are traitors, and liable to be dealt with as such, by the church which invested us with our official commission.

But I would just ask the secession ministers, who first arrived in this country, why did they not at once connect themselves with the Church of Scotland, when they found almost all their hearers to be of that communion? Why did they persevere in unfurling a secession standard, when they might at once have gone into the communion of the church, without subjecting themselves to censure, as they profess to be quite independent of the jurisdiction of the United Associate Synod at home? Had they done this, and by their own admission, it was quite competent for them to do so, then all the heart burnings, and envy, and hatred, which have been at work in this province for more than twenty years had been avoided; and we should have to witness this day, a body of Presbyterians, capable of occupying both the civil and ecclesiastical standing in the country, to which our numbers, our moral and political worth entitle us, and to ensure to our posterity an enlightened and well educated ministry, to uphold our cause, when we should be mingling with the ashes of our fathers.

But we have heard of a second reason against this union, which, if true, is a more vital one. Our church is alleged to be so corrupt, that our purer friends cannot conscientiously join her communion.—Now, Messrs. Editors, you will observe I do not come forward to denounce the corruptness of the Church of Scotland; I do not assert that she is a pure church, and I am far from thinking that those who prefer the charge against her, can lay claim to an immaculate church. But let us take purity in a comparative form, and most undoubtedly the Church of Scotland has little to dread when brought into fair comparison with the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia. All the purity that may have been attained by the latter in the wilderness, is equally attainable, if not attained, by the former. They both profess to adhere to the same standards, mode of worship, and discipline; and by whatever application of these, a supposed purity has been obtained by the one, the other admits of the same application in all their variety. And if there be an element of self purification in the one, there is the same in the other. By profession, the tests of application are the same, the men are the same, the doctrines are, or ought to be, the same, and I cannot on any principle of Mental Philosophy perceive, why the results should not be the same. I cannot see on what mighty vantage ground, a Burgher or Anti-burgher is placed, in order to obtain a higher degree of sanctity in that connection, which he might not attain within the pale of the Church of Scotland. I cannot see by what process of spiritual alchemy, a man is transformed from a sinner into a saint, under a secession regime, which he might not acquire under kirk tuition and discipline, and what applies to a man, applies equally to bodies of men.

But, on the supposition that a higher degree of purity prevails among our Secession Brethren than is to be found among us, (which is quite a gratuitous assumption,) why do they not throw into the scales their superior weight of sanctity, and weigh down our lighter attainments? Why do they not infuse into the supposed corrupt mass, all the leaven of purity which they possess, and thus verify the truth of our Saviour's statement, when he says, that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" If this holds in a process of demoralization, why should it not hold equally true in a process of moral purity. And if our brethren had a real, a hearty and prayerful regard for their friends and countrymen, instead of standing

aloof from them, and publicly and privately throwing their squibs at them, they should from moral sympathy endeavour to reclaim them from their degeneracy, by infusing among them the healthful spirit of vitality to which they profess to have attained, and thus throw a halo of moral splendour over the cause of Presbyterianism, which would induce the cold, phlegmatic disciples of other denominations to cast their lot in among us. This evidently is to be the way in which the joyous millennial days are to be ushered in on our alienated world. We are given to understand, that the minor distinctions of form which now unhappily divide the professing Christian world, shall merge into a common friendship and a common christianity, in which, "Ephraim shall not vex Judah nor Judah Ephraim;" but they shall say to each other, "Come let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."

These glorious days are not to be hastened on, by men standing up and pointing the finger of scorn at their neighbours, and countrymen, with the contemptuous cry, "Stand by for I am holier than thou," and it becomes every man, and more especially every minister of the Gospel, most seriously to consider whether by such a line of conduct he is not retarding the cause of God, rather than promoting it. And when Providence opens a door to heal the breaches which prejudice, antipathy, a tortuous or defective education may have originated or perpetuated in the world, it becomes him to consider, that he is not fighting against God, when he refuses to unite with his fellows, to spread the reign of peace, or by adhering to mere punctilios of form and outward observance, that he is not sapping the very foundation of the religion of the New Testament, which is founded on genuine love to the sons and daughters of humanity, in every clime, and under every variety of aspect in which they are to be found.

I have another communication or two to forward to you on this subject, but having transgressed so far on the patience of your readers already in this letter, I must defer them till next week.

Yours,

JOHN STEWART.

New Glasgow, 16th Dec. 1839.

INTERESTING EXTRACTS.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW YEAR.

From Fragments, from the Study of a Pastor. By Gardiner Spring, Pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church, in the City of New-Yew.

Can it be that another year has fled? With all its joys and trials, all its sins and duties, all its instructions and privileges,—is it fled? Yes, it is gone. It has terminated the lives of millions, and like an irresistible current has borne them on to the grave and the judgment. It has gone. Like a dream of the night, it has gone!

Amid the rapids of time, there are few objects a man observes with less care and distinctness than himself. To one standing on the shore, the current appears to pass by with inconceivable swiftness; but to one who is himself gliding down the stream, the face of this vast extent of waters is unruffled, and all around him is a dead calm. It is only by looking towards the shore, by discerning here and there a distant landmark, by casting his eye back upon the scenery that is retiring from his view, that he sees he is going forward. And how fast! The tall pine that stands alone on the mountain's brow, casts its shades far down the valley; while the huge promontory throws its shadow almost immeasurably on the plain below. It is but a few years, and I was greeting life's opening day. But yesterday, I thought myself approaching its meridian. To-day I look for those meridian splendors, and they are either wholly vanished, or just descending behind the evening cloud. I cannot expect to weather out the storms of this tempestuous clime much longer. A few more billows on these dangerous seas, perhaps a few days of fair weather, is the most I can look for, before I am either shipwrecked, or reach my desired haven.

Why fly these years so rapidly? It is in anticipation rather than retrospect, that men put too high an estimate upon earthly things. I have been wandering to-day in the grave-yard. I have trodden softly on the place of my fathers' sepulchres. I have been playing with the willow and the cypress that weep over their dust. The generations of men dwell here. Yes, here they are. Those whom I have loved, and, still love, and hope to love, are here. The fashion of this world passeth away. The fair fabric of earthly good is built upon the sand. It rocks and falls under the first stroke of the tempest. Man at his best estate is altogether vanity. It is well that it is so.—Were it otherwise, we should put far off the evil day, and live as if we flattered ourselves with immortality on the earth. When the Duke of Venice shewed Charles the Fifth the treasury of St. Mark, and the glory of his princely palace, instead of admiring them