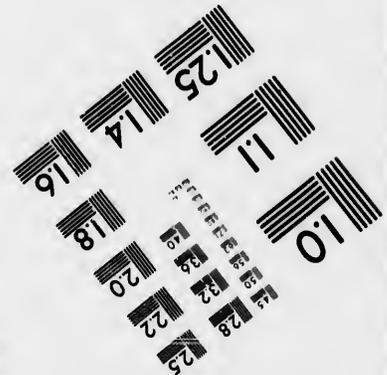
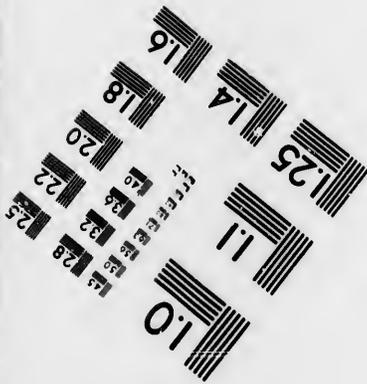
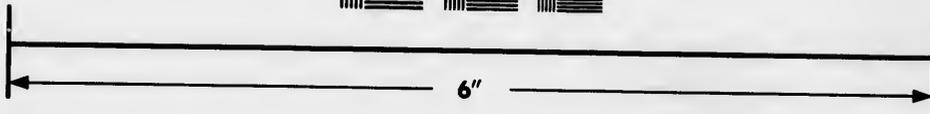
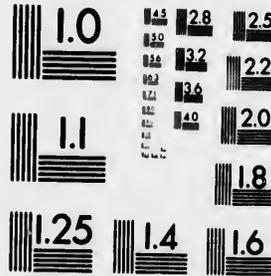


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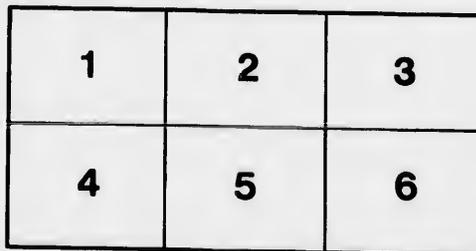
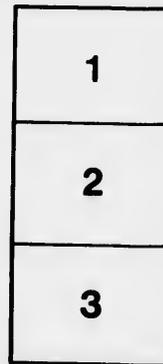
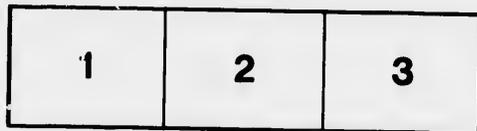
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SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S, EAST RIVER OF PICTO

ON THE 10TH OF NOVEMBER, 1875,

At the Induction of the Rev. A. McLEAN SINCLAIR,

BY

REV. D. MACRAE, A. M.

NEW ST. STEPHEN'S, SAINT JOHN, N. B.

"A new Commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you, That ye also love one another," &c.—JOHN xiii. 34.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE SESSION.

HALIFAX:

NOVA SCOTIA PRINTING COMPANY.

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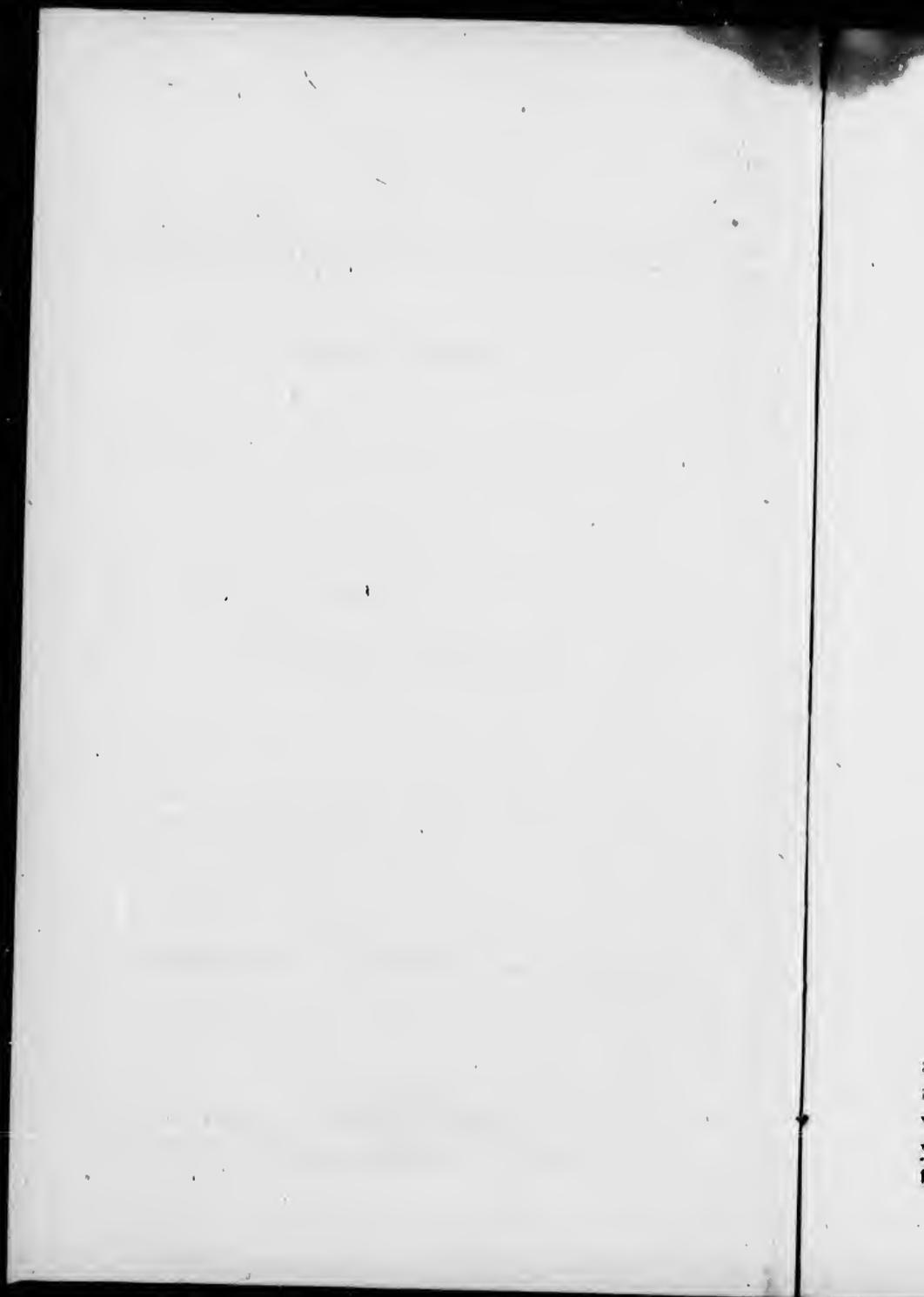
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S E R M O N .

"A new Commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another, &c.—JOHN xiii, 34, 35.

Yes, brethren, a new Commandment; new, then, new, now; for hardly yet, after eighteen centuries of Christian work in the world, has it even begun to be obeyed, or properly speaking, understood; and new forever; for more and more, as the ages of eternity roll on, shall fresh, glorious light be cast, in the very heaven of heavens, upon those Christ-words of touching pathos, "as I have loved you."

When honoured, dear friends, with an invitation from the worthy pastor of your choice, and from the Presbytery of which he is a member, to deliver the discourse of induction to-day, my text flashed upon me, as, beyond all others, the text for the occasion. May I humbly venture to express the hope, that the suggestion was of that gracious Spirit, to whose working among you, I believe, your happy meeting of to-day is due? For it seemed to me, on hearing the tidings of your union, of disseñsions hushed, and schisms healed, and sectarianisms slain, of your resolve that, by God's help, "Ephraim should no more envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim,"—it seemed to me that you were exhibiting a grand and memorable illustration of obedience to this great commandment—evincing, in a manner not to be gainsaid, that verily "the love of Christ was being richly shed abroad in your hearts, by the holy Spirit given unto you." And I felt that the circumstances demanded not only counsels for days (I

trust, many and happy) to come, but also some reference to the past and the present. For, brethren, you have verily done a new thing in your history as a people, taken a step which, a few years ago, was undreamt of among you; which, up, almost, to the moment at which you entered upon this course, it was hoped by many, it was feared by some, you would decline. But you have taken it, to God be the praise! You have bravely, calmly, deliberately evinced that your Christian profession is a reality. You have determined to abound in the first, last fruit of that profession, Love. You have submitted yourselves, in the sight of God, to this new commandment. How then can I hope more appropriately to occupy your time for a few minutes to-day, than by expounding to some extent, its nature and motive.

I. It is a new commandment. Yes, brethren, it was a new thing. (1), To issue an injunction to love in the form of a command. "How can I," you ask, "control my affections? How submit their wayward lawless tendencies to the dictates of order and rule? My affections! Against or with my will,—as *they* please, not as *I* please, will they not manifest themselves? Likings and dislikings, by what process of reasoning or discipline are they to be governed into obedience?"

. . . . It is quite true. Directly the affections cannot be brought into subjection. No potentate, of authority how great soever, can bid or constrain me to love or hate at his pleasure. He may hold out the inducement of bribes the most alluring, or endeavour to shake my constancy by threats of tortures the most appalling. In vain. Not thus can the soul's affections be won. Not thus does Jesus gain his victories. No, He calls forth love by loving. He takes us with the wiles of his great love. He surprizes us into the obedience that he covets. And we are made willing captives in the very course of the procedure, whereby he leads us out into the "glorious liberty of the children of God."

It was a new thing (2) in the history of man, to entrust all life and all the conduct of life to the influence of this solitary power,

to confide the existence and growth of righteousness, holiness, purity, truth, of all that honours God on earth, and dignifies man for eternity, to the operation of this unaided force. But this is what Jesus has done—"Love one another," knowledge is in that; for "he that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." "Love one another," righteousness is in that. It is "the fulfilling of the law." Law vanishes in the light of love. Its enactments are never appealed to. Its countless dictates may be sealed up and laid aside, obeyed as they are without thought that they exist, more fully, more unhesitatingly than if every step were taken in obedience to an audible command. With a community under the influence of the royal law, this golden rule—it is as with a happy and well-ordered family. Parents and children, sisters and brethren, the happiness of each is the joy of all. How can one wrong another? The honor of the parent is sacred to the heart of filial reverence, the welfare of the child to the heart of parental solicitude. Life, purity, property, good-name, rejoicing in the good of each other, what force shall so guard these, so prompt to watchfulness over these as love?

Christ, in these words, puts his hand on the main-spring of human life's machinery. You have seen an engineer standing in his place before some mighty engine. It thrills and trembles with pent-up force. A lever is touched. A child's hand might move it. And the whole of the ponderous machinery is at once in rapid movement. Love is life's main-spring, and its impulses send us whithersoever it will. For all the fires and threats of Mount Sinai, for all the terrors and hopes of the hereafter, in the room of all precepts, as the one sufficient substitute of all fences and all restrictions, Christ has given us this new thing, Love.

It was a new thing (3) in the light of Christ's exposition of what the words "one another" implied. To love—love God, love man, our neighbour—that this was duty was old as man's creation. The Jew had this grand truth and what did he do with it? What did he make of it? He did with and made of it just what

we of the different Presbyterian sections were doing until the other day. He fenced this large and comprehensive law with restrictions here and limitations there,—so hemmed it in and overlaid it with glosses and interpretations that actually, when Christ came, it was all but utterly forgotten that this was the great commandment of the law. Forgotten, I say. They actually found it possible to discuss which was the first and great commandment of the law. They came to Christ with it as if this question was or could be a serious difficulty, a question in his answering to which they might “entangle him in his talk.” And when he did answer, and his answer had flashed upon them like a new revelation, they still had a difficulty in reserve. “Who is our neighbour?” they asked. They did not know, just as you and I did not know, that is did not realize, a few years ago, who was our neighbour. They had come to believe that the very fact that they were bidden to love their neighbour implied that they were also enjoined to hate him whom they did not deem a neighbour; whom they deemed or were taught to regard as an enemy. And were we not practically reasoning in the same way? Ah, friends! you remember how Christ replied to the question “Who is my neighbour?” how he chose for illustration one of a people whom every Jew believed in conscience that he was bound to hate. And you have all felt how Christ was himself the grandest illustration of His own teaching, the “Good Samaritan” indeed, who looked from heaven, and bethought Him of us wretched, perishing, rebels on earth as His neighbours, and so made this the new commandment for ever.

It was a new commandment (4) in the extent to which the Spirit of Christ enabled the early disciples to understand and obey it. Brethren, what in all history is like the movement which took place during those first years of Apostolic story for the conversion of the world to Christ? We read the Acts of the Apostles with understandings dulled by familiarity. We take it as a matter of course that a Paul, a Peter, or a John, should act as they did; that they should go through

"perils of waters, of robbers, by their countrymen, by the heathen in the city, the wilderness, the sea, among false brethren," and all to save men's souls. We are apt to forget that nothing of this sort ever happened in the world before their time. It had never occurred to a single human being as a thing that ought to be done, or that any one was under an obligation to do. What to the Jew did it matter that the Gentiles were dying in ignorance of Israel's God? Let them perish! The Jew was glad. What Greek or Roman dreamt that it was a duty incumbent on him to impart any knowledge or wisdom possessed by him to nations more ignorant than himself? On what one human soul had it dawned, until Christ came, that "it is more blessed in any respect whatever to give than to receive"?

You see it was in every respect a new thing. A new sense of the brotherhood of the race, and of the duty of each to deal with his fellow-man as with a brother, appeared in these disciples. "Barbarians, Scythians, bond and free," all were one, it was for the first time felt, in Christ Jesus, and that oneness must be proclaimed, and how its blessings were to be secured must be made known; and every disciple would rather perish than fail in doing what in him lay, be the risks what they might, to make it known. This was what "loving one another" meant for the first disciples of Christ. This was how they tried to show to all men that they were Christ's disciples. . . . My friends, in all simple seriousness, what did the Christian church come to, as the ages rolled on? What, looking to its many unloving sects, does it mean to-day? What did we ourselves mean till a few years ago? How were we reading our Gospels? Here is our Saviour's sign-manual. Here is the one point, upon which above all others, He lays the greatest stress. Call it doctrine, duty, principle, evidence of faith, what you will. In the teaching of the Master himself, the spirit, essence, substance, sum of all that he taught, insisted on, demanded is just this "Love one another." Were we doing it? Did we think of it as in any way necessary

to our soul's salvation? In what Creed, Confession of Faith, Basis of Union, ever yet drawn up or devised, is this foremost law—this one supreme command of Christ contained, referred to, or at all recognized as a prominent, as the point of points, in the Christian system? Strange, is it not? The words seem plain enough, but no one appeared to see them. They were like the names in large letters that you may have noticed stamped on some maps—one name spread in a manner over the whole surface—the letters unobserved just because of their very size. And Christians were like school-children puzzling themselves at the game of finding out the names of the smallest and most obscure places, while the most conspicuous were unregarded. Thank God! a brighter day is dawning. Subtle doctrinal hair-splittings are ceasing to interest living men as they once did. The great duties of the Christian faith, the weightier matters are coming to be felt to be the weightier matters, and I rejoice that you, this day, have been led, by God's spirit, to set this noble example; to give this proof that you are Christ's Disciples. In your old-fashioned Friday meetings, held before the Communion, you discussed for many a year, the marks of being a Christian. Here is *the* mark, beyond all others unmistakeable, patent, owned in heaven, undeniable on earth, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

(5) One thought more. The wise men of our day tell us that the law which governs the whole animated creation of God on earth is, what they call "the struggle for existence." All creatures are competing with each other which shall most multiply and occupy the largest portion of earth's surface,—plant with plant, animal with animal, nation with nation. You see this law at work when weeds grow up in your fields, and threaten to choke the good seed that you have sown there; and when you root out the weeds you are helping the good seed in its struggle, lest the weeds should conquer and overspread the whole of what you would devote to better uses.

Yes, brethren, that would seem to be the law. There is

strife through all nature, a ceaseless conflict. And when the white man came to these lands, and the red man disappeared before him, it was still the prevailing of the same great principle, the strong crushing the weak. Ah, friends, is that the law of the Gospel, the law for man?

Read my text once more. You see it is the very reverse. It is not "struggle for existence," the strong crushing the weak. It is "Love," in virtue of which the strong shall help the weak, shall pity, succor, save. The law of the Gospel is the exact contrary of the law of the world. "The law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus sets the work of Christian men free from the law of sin and death." And in this light also see what a new commandment it is. Not strife, not competition, not trying who shall be master; but love, sympathy, trying who shall most largely serve. That is the true human nature; and the Gospel came to make us truly men. Our sectarian strifes, what were and are they but evidences to what an extent the spirit of the world, the law of "struggle," of the strong endeavoring to crush the weak, had taken possession of the Church. Be ours, henceforward, a new strife—the debt of love—the competing with each other, who shall most largely serve.

And now II. What is our motive to obey this law? Which is the standard of obedience which we have to set before us? That, too, is here, "as I have loved you," "As." How great is that "as?" How, brethren, shall we speak of the love of Christ? You know what happens when we turn our eyes to the sun at noon-day, and look at his dazzling brilliance. We are blinded, dazed, our vision becomes "dark with excess of light." I think that this, perhaps, is one reason why for so long, why even yet, the full meaning and glory, and surpassing importance of Christ's new commandment have not been felt, not seen as it were by the Christian Church. We looked at the love of Christ. We were dazed by that love. We said in effect: "To what purpose our attempting to love like that? We cannot do it." Every

effort made by mere man in the way of love to his fellow looked so poor and mean in the noon-day radiance of the cross, was so obscured, like stars at noon day, that men lost sight of the principle as binding upon, or applicable to them, in their mutual relations altogether. Man's utmost seemed so little that it was as nothing, and therefore he did not strive to do even that little.

But, brethren, here is our law, and it is for us to be faithful over the few things that we can do, that are within our power placed there by God. "As I have loved you." And look not only at Christ on the cross; look at him in this and this incident of his wondrous life on earth. See him in his tenderness now to some blind one, now to a hungry people. See him comforting the widow, and receiving the sinner, and owning the publican as a child of Abraham. See him taking the little ones in his arms and blessing them. See how he never reproaches even the disciples, even Peter for denying him. Take Jesus where you will, coming down from the mount, in a desert place, by the well in Samaria, behold him waked from weary slumbers in the boat on the lake, or in the house at Bethany, or away among the heathens in Syro-Phenicia. Always, from first to last, a tender Lord, not withdrawing his confidence, too, even when those in whom the confidence was placed proved unstable. Love all the way, a love as much vaster than our poor conceptions as his divine humanity surpassed and surpasses in purity and power, the sin blurred humanity of fallen man.

Brethren, Christ is the mark set before us, Christ's love. "It is far above, and out of reach," do you say? Yes; but you can press toward that mark. Just because the standard is so high, will this commandment be forever new. The more you press towards it the more will you feel that evermore it "passeth knowledge." But the ocean's tide beats into the little creek. If you open your heart to Christ, the infinite tide of his love will swell into and overflow your soul. And I rejoice to think that this day is in a manner a flood-tide

moment in your history as a Christian people. O, see to it that the wave do not ebb. Too often are there backward movements in the Christian life of a people. But, if I read my Bible aright, there is no need-be for a backward movement. The Christian's motto is evermore "Forward." Why should it not be?

Many prophets and wise men desired my friends to see what you see to-day, but were not so privileged. "The fathers where are they?" One good old man to whom so many of you looked up as a father, to whom your minister elect looked, ever since his ministry among you, as to a right-hand friend and wise counsellor we miss him, miss Finlay Grant to-day. But he saw it, like Abraham, only not afar off, and was glad. And there is one yet living, by whom many of you who are now middle-aged men were baptized, by whom some of you were married, by whom that elder whom I have named, and others connected with you, were admitted to the eldership; the old man, my father, the tidings of this day's doings will gladden his heart, also. For the strifes of the past have faded into memories, and his one counsel, now, in respect to all that once separated us into hostile camps, is the counsel of John the aged, "Little children love one another."

Brethren, all things human are imperfect. "Offences must needs be." It is impossible absolutely to guard against them. But you can take precautions, you can be prepared, as much as in you lies to avoid them. And I shall venture on a single counsel, obedience to which will, I think, by God's blessing, go far to preserve intact the blessed influences of this happy day. It is—Keep politics out of the church. Agree to differ *there*. Resolve to be one *here*. There is nothing impossible in this. You may differ about human representatives in mere human governments. You cannot differ about your Representative in the Kingdom of Heaven. You have made your choice. You have, there is but one Christ. *Can* you desire to put another in the stead of *this* Mediator? That

election is over forever, Christ is your all, and will be your all, throughout the eternal ages. You are one in Christ. Retain, maintain, sustain your unity. "By this let all men know that ye are Christ's disciples, that ye love one another."

Brethren, I have now been for some months a member of a united Presbytery. Believe me, we have never from our first moment of union felt otherwise, than as brethren. We never knew meetings of Presbytery more cordial, more frank, more brotherly. Now and then the thought occurs, what could our long severance have meant? On what was it based? On what and by what were we divided? We cannot tell. We are as if we had been always one. It will be so, I trust and believe, by the blessing of our living Lord with you.

Let me say a single word with regard to the minister of your united choice. Brethren, I know him well, know him to be a ripe scholar, a sound and original thinker, a wise counsellor, and, as you know still better, a faithful pastor. Esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake; esteem him for his own. Obey my text thus also in cultivating your affection for a pastor who stands high for genuine manliness of character in the respect of his brethren in the ministry, and whose ministrations, valued by you in the past, will profit you yet more abundantly, as you and he grow together in grace and the knowledge of your Lord.

Brethren, your determination to act henceforward as a united congregation took effect, I was overjoyed to hear, in a spirit of harmony all but absolutely complete. Towards the one or two otherwise minded what will be your demeanour? Let it be governed by the law of my text. "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." I cannot but cherish the hope that they too will in time be moved, when they see "that your faith groweth exceedingly, and that the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth," when they see your "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of

hope in our Lord Jesus Christ," and that in these ways you are "making sure your election of God."

And now, let me bring these imperfect remarks to a close. I rejoice in this day's work; rejoice in the fact that the reproach of an absolutely baseless sectarianism has begun to be rolled away from this noble county. I rejoice that that beginning has been made in a district which alike for my father's sake and my own, I have reason to love so well. I rejoice in the example you have set, and in those over-rulings of Providence which have rendered its setting possible. I rejoice yet more in the thought of the source to which, without doubt, your union is to be traced, that Gracious Spirit who sheds abroad the love of Christ in the hearts of His willing subjects. I rejoice in anticipating the blessed influences which must surely flow from what you have this day done, and in the blessed results which will surely be manifested among you, as the days roll on. "The generations that are to be shall bless and magnify the Lord." A hindrance has been removed out of the way of the progress of pure religion and undefiled in your midst. No more will the "sour grapes eaten by the fathers, set the teeth of your children on edge." You have "honoured Christ, and he will honour you." You have evinced that faith in Him has verily a power to "cast down and to raise up," to overcome evil and to establish the good. The revival of religion among you has borne fruits; it has manifested its genuineness. It was no mere wild-fire of excitement, such as in some other places, led the hearers thereof to "look for much and it brought forth little." It has evinced itself in practical consequences. The step which the Lord has led you to take is, I firmly believe, the harbinger of the day, when the union effected among the Presbyterians of this great Dominion shall be complete, presenting an unbroken front from sea to sea, the most honoured, we trust, of the churches of Christ, the most determined and sleeplessly vigilant foe of Popery on the one hand, and of Infidelity on the other—"a pillar and ground of truth."

And now, "by this shall all men know that ye are Christ's disciples, if ye love one another." "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up upon you his countenance and give you peace."—Amen.



