

THE
CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

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A JUSTIFIABLE OUTCRY.

IT is by one who calls himself "An Old Fogy." It is found in a late issue of the "Advance." It is against many of the plans resorted to by churches to raise money. It should be read from every pulpit in the land, even if the sermon should have to wait a few minutes. For it is a sermon in itself.

The points the writer raises are these. (1) That the support of the Church should always be sought on the ground of unselfish and Christian benevolence. But many churches have departed from this ground, and seek their money from concerts, lectures, suppers, fairs, neck-tie parties, maple-sugar socials, and even dances and theatrical exhibitions. (2) That there is no telling where a church, which once takes up with shifts and expedients for raising money, will stop. The temptation will come to provide the most worldly amusements in return for the financial aid it seeks. (3) It is not the slender purses, but the lean spiritual life of church members which makes their treasury lean. Improve the spiritual life of the church, and one of the first results of that will be to fill up the exhausted treasury of the church.

These conclusions are positively incontrovertible. And the wisdom of uttering them now cannot be questioned. In many of our Canadian churches, the social meetings in the week go very far towards nullifying all the preaching of the Lord's day. It is simply a disgrace to any Christian church to allow on its social programmes slangy and coarse songs or readings. And yet it is allowed. In such cases there is no thought as to whether the exercises are demoralizing or stimulating. The sole thought, is will they draw a house? We have heard programmes which were so simply disgusting that the only fit place to carry them out would seem to be a saloon. And yet, so demoralized was the taste of those who planned them, that there was not the faintest protest against their vulgarity. Money was the supreme object of consideration. And the effect on the audience was obvious. Any piece which was helpful to the spiritual life was received in sullen silence, while an encore awaited any reading or song which bordered on the indecent. We may not yet have reached the position of a church we know of, where the Committee of Entertainment absolutely refused to allow anything of a sacred character on the programme. But we are "old-fogyish" enough to believe that that is where very many churches will ultimately land.

The season of the year is at hand when church entertainments will flourish again. Is it asking too much of our Canadian Congregational churches when we solicit them to take a strong and decided stand against the tend-

ency to absolutely secularize if not demoralize our Christian sociability? We believe in socials, in a good laugh, in a warm handshake, and every other thing that recreates us without defiling us. But we protest against bringing the spirit of the world into our churches, even though the treasury may be low. Our children, nursed in such an atmosphere, may find it hard to see any need of conversion, or any difference between Christians and the children of the world.

What is wanted in all our churches is a Committee of good Christian men and women, full of joy and steadfastness, who shall supervise every programme, and weed out therefrom everything which would tend to undermine spiritual life or lower true Christian sentiment. With such a board of supervisors, the benediction would not be so often pronounced over the head of the trash which is blessed at present.

THE English Established Church is all the time up before Parliament for some legislation or other. A bill has recently been laid on the table of the House of Lords to regulate the affairs of that church. It provides that the Archbishops, Bishops and clergy in Convocation may from time to time propose alterations in the Prayer-Book, which shall be presented to the Queen in Council. Such alterations are to be laid before Parliament within twenty-one days of its meeting. Within forty days either House of Parliament may address the Queen, asking her not to accede to the changes. If such an address is not made, however, within that period, Her Majesty may make an order ratifying those changes, and fixing the date of their introduction. Now, the meaning of that Bill is to put the control of the Episcopal Church in the hands of its clergy. Convocation does not represent the lay element in the Church. We might not be disposed to quarrel with that arrangement if the Church were on the same footing as other denominations. That would be a matter of internal administration with which outsiders would have nothing to do directly. But that Church is a State institution, and it is neither just nor expedient to place its government entirely in the hands of a hierarchy practically responsible to nobody. The plan contains the old idea of Dr. Chalmers—that of a Church supported by the State, but always saying to the State: "Hands off! we shall manage our own affairs." There is no likelihood that the scheme will ever go into operation.

KING MENDEK, of Koa, South Abyssinia, has abolished slave-trading in his realm and on his frontier, because, as he tells the London Missionary Society, "I am, and wish to remain, a Christian."

It is proposed to hold a sort of Ecumenical Sunday School Convention in London next year in connection with the centenary of Robert Raikes. Sunday schools the world over are to be represented on the occasion. The gathering will be a large one, no doubt. We hope that some practical good will come of it.

Correspondence.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCHES.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

Since the change in the editorial staff of the INDEPENDENT, I have noticed a great many short, but oftentimes rather spicy, editorials on "Organized Congregationalism," "Centralization," "Historic Polity," "The Council System," etc., etc., the import of which, if I rightly understand it, is, that *Simon-pure Congregationalism must not savour of co-operative fellowship of the churches, in any decisions or opinions upon matters of faith or discipline.*

It would appear, from the editorial ring of your paper, that *Congregationalism* is synonymous with *Independency*, to the extent, at least, that a church has no right to say what a sister church shall believe, what shall be the purity (or limit of impurity) in her discipline, or who shall become her pastor.

Now I am well aware that Congregationalism and Independency have been, to a certain extent, synonymously applied to the polity of our churches; and, that in England, our churches are still spoken of under both denominational names. But I have always considered—whether rightly or wrongly—that, when correctly understood and applied, there is a vast difference between the two systems.

Independency, as I understand it, claims and exercises the right to decide its own articles of faith and polity, whether orthodox or unorthodox, congregational or un-congregational. And no other church has any right to interfere, for she stands entirely independent of, and irresponsible to, all other churches. Such are the Metropolitan Church in Boston, Mass., of which Rev. W. H. H. Murray is pastor, and the Wesley Congregational Church in Montreal, of which the Rev. Jas. Roy is pastor. These churches have no denominational connection, and are therefore subject to no denominational restrictions relative to faith or polity. They may believe in the *Trinity*, or reject it. They may hold to a scriptural eschatology, restorationism, or annihilationism. They may exercise the right of having all matters of discipline submitted to full vote of church members, or limited to a board of elders. They *must* choose and ordain their own pastor, and depend entirely upon their own judgment of what constitutes fitness for the pastoral office. In matters of church-fellowship they must make their own choice from such churches as are willing to fellowship them. Such I understand to be the prerogatives of Independency.

But I have always supposed Congregationalism to be a very different polity. In my opinion, our polity not only recognizes the individuality of each church, as possessing within itself, that which, in the scriptural sense, constitutes it a church, or *ecclesia*, but also the fellowship and co-operation of churches of like faith and order. This, it seems to me, is not only in keeping with a sound judgment of how to efficiently put into operation concerted Christian work, but is also in harmony with the teaching and practices of the apostolic churches. The New Testament only impliedly teaches the *individuality* of the churches, while the *fellowship* of the churches is strictly enjoined.

If I am right in my opinion of the co-operative fellowship of Congregational churches, it becomes a serious matter as to what the faith and discipline of the churches co-operating in such a fellowship shall be. How "can two walk together except they be agreed?" If a part of our churches believe in Christ as the *Divine* and only Saviour of sinners, and others of them are asserting with equal confidence and zeal the *Unitarian* idea of Christ as only an example of a *good man*, who may have erred in many of his opinions and teachings, but was nevertheless the most *perfect man* the world has ever known, and that salvation is dependent upon no *Divine* aid, then it is plain that there can be no co-operative fellowship of the churches holding such different views.

This leads up to the question, *How can such co-operative fellowship be secured and maintained?* Surely it cannot be while the churches or ministry are at variance on these points. For what one church or-