

to be little likely to mend the matter, as the committee, chosen from widely separated localities, cannot meet during the year, and will be replaced at the next annual session by a fresh body of men, who will be under the same pressure for time.

In cases where all is plain sailing, where the applicant is well-known, and testimonials satisfactory, and nothing doubtful appears, there is little difficulty. But where there is simple defect of evidence, and especially any ground for suspicion, trouble arises. But this is felt most of all, in what may be called "disciplinary" cases, that is, where a member already in the Union is charged with any offence.

Judging from these recent proceedings in the two Associations above-mentioned, and from private utterances in other quarters, we think it every way likely that a majority of the members of the Union, if not the whole body, would welcome a plan which would relieve them of a responsibility which is often burdensome, *provided always* that the relief is effectual and the end they have in view—the securing of a pure membership—can be obtained by other means.

It is therefore, in a friendly, not an antagonistic spirit, that we contribute our mite to the discussion of this question, in order that it may be viewed from all sides, and such a deliberate conclusion arrived at, as may give permanent satisfaction to all concerned.

We presume that the proposed change has been suggested by the usage of Congregational bodies elsewhere. In the United States, for instance, the State organisations are *delegated* bodies, so many members being sent to the annual meetings by each of the several local associations, or conferences, or whatever else they may be called. The State organisation has no individual membership, whether of churches or ministers, but consists of such and such local organisations, represented by delegates. Only these local bodies appear on the Roll of the State body. The only question that can be asked in regard to any one claiming the rights of membership in the general body, is, "Does he bring proper credentials from his local constituents?"—The only way into a State Association is through a local association; and even so, a man simply takes his turn as delegate for a particular year. Other members of the local bodies may indeed attend the annual meetings of the general body, as they do, for instance, in Maine and many other States, especially in the West, but they do so as spectators, or, at the utmost, as honorary members, having perhaps by courtesy the liberty to speak, but no power to vote.

Now, we do not understand that it is proposed to change the constitution of our Union, so as to make it delegated body. Its numbers are none too large as it is. The Union and the Associations are coordinate bodies, equal and independent though differing in extent of territory, and do not stand to each other in the same relations as the State bodies across the lines do to the constituent local ones.

In the latter case, the connection is integral: in the former, there is at present hardly any relation at all. The Union and the local Associations have no of-