

mentary condition formerly limited its aggressiveness and prevented the cherishing of denominational fellowship and loyalty, is has been taught by the consequences to rectify the error, and to improve it organization for purposes of church-communion and co-operation, so that it can now better do national than once it could State work. If the time was when its doctrinal basis was narrow, and thus sectarian, it has learned to broaden it, so that all Evangelical Christians can stand upon it and clasp hands. We have a noble array of instrumentalities, such as our fathers never even dreamed of, in our colleges, theological seminaries, benevolent societies, State associations and National Council, with intelligence and wealth, guided by experience, to put them to use. The west is now, as ever, wide open to our occupation, so far as we have the energy and tact needed to embrace opportunities, while its characteristic spirit of freedom and independence, and its ready recognition of practical advantages in an emergency, incline its heterogeneous population to find a place of union and organization on our democratic platform. The South, also, once completely closed against our slavery-hating membership, now invites well directed and patient effort to spread our principles and to exemplify our fellowship among those who hitherto have been strangers to our ideas and methods. We may begin with the black but we shall not end there.

With all these confessed and important advantages, we must not, however, think that no obstacles lie in our path. In these days, when sectarian bonds are loosening, it is easy for people to go from us, as well as to come to us. In vain shall we tell of our Pilgrim ancestry, in vain shall we boast of Plymouth Rock, in vain shall we point to the long list of New England worthies, in vain even shall we prove, to our own satisfaction, that we represent the church order of the New Testament, if we do not also show that, as an ecclesiastical tree, we are bearing the best fruit. We must not only be liberal, but also soundly and firmly Evangelical. Our ardor for liberty must be tempered by a due regard for order. Zeal for humanity must not blind us to the fact that there still is such a thing as theology. While we plead for love and fraternity, we must not preach or talk "gush." It will not do to mistake sentimentality for piety, or to subordinate purity to peace. We shall not possess, in the future, some advantages which once incidentally helped us. Twenty years since, the anti-slavery reform mightily aided us at the West. Church after church came over to us, entire, from Presbyterianism, on that ground, and parts of other churches seceded and organized Congregationally, rather than remain longer in fellowship with slave-holding. The schism between the two schools of the Presbyterian body also operated in our favour by creating a reaction against that system, and by frequently leading members of one division to unite with a Congregational church rather than with a church belonging to another division. Now the healing of the schism gives Presbyterianism a season of unity (until the next schism shall occur, after some abuse of ecclesiastical power), and also the *prestige* of numbers and strength.

We are now insensible to the fact that the unsettled condition of certain questions of church discipline and procedure has occasioned some damage to our system of late in the estimation of many who look at it from the outside, and may have created in some quarters a measure of distrust as to the adequacy of our ecclesiastical methods, and the sureness and impartiality of their operation. But if for the time being Congregationalism has been under a cloud, the cloud is not of that kind which encompasses the heavens as it rises, shutting out the sunshine, and serving as the precursor of coming storm. Few of us have sold out our stock in Congregationalism, even though its last fluctuation has carried it in some markets a trifle below par. There is too much elastic strength in the system, and the general clear-sighted confidence in its principles is too firm, to allow any continued depreciation. We look in the long run for a steady "rise." And from the next meeting of the National Council, with its free comparison of common-sense views and orderly methods of discussion and declaration, we expect such a wholesome impulse as shall carry the denomination more grandly forward than ever before.—*Congregationalist*.