

THE  
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ONE FEATURE OF REVIVALISM.

WE approve of revivals when they grow up spontaneously, and not when they are gotten up artificially. In the former case, results promise to be permanently good; in the latter, a number of persons are suddenly precipitated upon the religious life with no security of permanence. This must certainly be accounted an evil. In the Methodist system, the minister is bound to hold revival services once a year on his circuit, and he does it as a matter of routine, without any reference to whether the conditions are such as to render the work permanently useful. Thus, annually, special services are held, and numbers of people under excitement are precipitated upon the religious life, the great majority of which sink back in a little while into their old ways. We do not favour revivals by almanac dates; but wherever there seems a prospect of permanent good being done, we would be only too glad to see the attempt made.

But there is one feature in the revivalism of the present to which we take exception, and we think on good grounds. A revivalist visits a place, and either before he begins his work he stipulates for absolute control of the arrangements, or without any stipulation he assumes all control, and next to ignores the pastor and church officials altogether. Everybody is to give way for the visitor; all other plans are to be subordinated to his. And the coolness with which this is frequently done goes to show that this is considered the right thing.

Now, we do not account it either right or prudent that the regular servants of a church should be bowed out, or left to the minor task of "pronouncing the benediction," that a man who is here to-day and gone to-morrow, and who is responsible to nobody, may follow his sweet will. And this view is not based upon any fear that church officers will suffer from loss of dignity. For we do not care about hurting dignity, as it is only a very artificial thing at best. But we base it on prudence, on a desire that the good done may be permanently done. From this standpoint we judge that instead of a revivalist assuming to control a church, he should help the church, being more of a servant than a dictator. Sometimes a church may be warranted in handing over the management to men of much experience, and much honoured by God in the work; but such cases must be deemed exceptional. Generally, the minister of the church should be at the head of revival efforts, backed up by the more earnest and godly members of his flock. Then the many unpleasantnesses and dissensions which revivals sometimes leave in churches

might be avoided. And, also, the revival itself would not be so likely to depart with the revivalist as it so frequently does.

Dr. Blaikie tells of a minister who had a recipe against the dangers of special services in what he called his "three S's." They were these, "Substitute," "Suggest," "Supplement." If any one wished a hymn of a somewhat ranting kind to be sung, he would invite the people to unite in singing, quietly substituting a more unexceptional hymn. If any one proposed an additional meeting at a late hour of the night, he would suggest that a meeting should be held next evening. If any one would give a one-sided address, he would supplement it himself by presenting the other side of the question. Thus avoiding collision with the rushing stream, he contrived to guide it in a useful direction; and when the waters subsided, a valuable deposit was left, and ever after richer clusters hung on the branches of his church's vine. This anecdote deserves more than a passing recital, it is worth earnest consideration.

"SENSATIONALISM."

DR. JOSEPH PARKER, of the City Temple, London, speaking on "Christ's Success as a Preacher," uses the following language:—

"Another element in the success of Jesus Christ as a preacher was the continual and healthy excitement which His preaching occasioned. Nobody could listen to Jesus Christ with indifference. . . . Jesus Christ's preaching excited everybody. It maddened some people. And unless our preaching does that, it is of no use. . . . I like to be turned into a frenzy by a preacher. I like to contradict him, to ask him questions, to say 'stop!' at the time he torments me and makes me writhe under him; but afterwards I feel as if I had been at school, or on a battle-field, or on a mountain, drinking the wine of the fresh wind, and receiving baptisms and benedictions."

And the doctor is right.

There is in some quarters a strong prejudice against what is called "sensationalism" in the pulpit. If a preacher quickens thought and emotion, he is regarded with suspicion and positive disfavour. Decorum is held to be the first law of a religious service. "Be proper," is the foremost injunction laid upon the man who stands in God's name to proclaim eternal verities. And what is the result? Deadness, formality, dulness, inefficiency.

Now, "Sensationalism," we maintain, is demanded of every Christian minister. His first duty is to move his hearers. It is not to drone dreary platitudes, however true they may be. It is to move his hearers, to arouse them to thought and feeling and action. It is to move them from ignorance to knowledge, from indecision to resolution, from good to evil. And no one has any business to be in the pulpit unless he possesses this motive power. But why should not every one who proclaims the eternal truth of God display this power? The doctrines he enunciates are the sublimest possible. They ought to command attention and awaken interest. And they will do this when they are spoken as they should be spoken. Let them be spoken clearly and definitely and pos-

itively; let them be spoken by men of strong convictions, of earnest souls, of loving hearts, and there will be no complaint of crowsy congregations. There will be "sensation," and "sensation" that will produce blessed results in character and life.

News of the Churches.

THE churches at South Caledon and North Erin have united under the pastorate of Rev. F. Wrigley.

STOUFFVILLE.—Rev. T. W. Handford lectured here on the 17th ult., on "Martin Luther." The audience was large and the lecture highly appreciated.

THE Rev. Jas. Davies, having accepted a call to the church at Ayr, preached his farewell sermon in Zion Congregational Church, Acton, on Sabbath evening last. The church was well filled.

UNIONVILLE has called the Rev. E. D. Silcox to take the pastoral oversight of their church, in connection with Stouffville. He has accepted the invitation, and assisted by Mr. C. H. Keays will work both churches together. A new church is to be built at once, to cost about \$3,000. This amount is nearly all provided for.

THE new Wesley Congregational Church, Montreal, is rapidly approaching completion. The seats have been put in and the painting is being finished as rapidly as possible. It is the intention of the building committee to have the building ready to be opened on the 25th May. The lighting and ventilation are as near perfection as possible, and when completed it will be one of the most convenient of church edifices.

EATON, QUE.—By way of instructive entertainment for the young people and others in this village, the pastor (the Rev. W. W. Smith) has been giving for the past few weeks a literary lecture every Tuesday night; most of them in the church. The list was: 1. "Philadelphia and the Centennial." 2. "Israel in Egypt, from the monuments." 3. "Three weeks on the Scottish Border." 4. "Modern History of Palestine." 5. "The Stranger in Edinburgh." 6. "General Wolfe." 7. "The Modern Babylon, or Reminiscences of London." 8. "Upper Canada." 9. "Some Famous Classics." The lectures were entirely free.

SARNIA.—The Congregational church here held their anniversary tea meeting on the 22nd ult. The attendance was good, and the table well loaded and handsomely decorated with flowers and plants. After tea and social intercourse, brief addresses were made by Rev. Messrs. Hay, Henderson, and Scott; and a few songs were well rendered by the Misses Morison, Hempy and Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell then read a humorous selection in good style, and the meeting was dismissed after spending a most delightful evening. On the following evening the Sunday School had an entertainment. Tea, readings, recitations, and music were the order of the evening. It was much enjoyed by all.

A VERY pleasant social gathering was held in the Congregational church, Forest, on the 16th inst., consisting of parties from the united congregations of Forest and Ebenezer. After dinner was served, Mr. Duncan Campbell was called to the chair, the duties of which he filled in his usual able manner. Brief addresses were made by Messrs. H. Campbell, D. Brodie, L. McFadyen, D. Livingston and Rev. R. Hay. Before the meeting closed, the pastor was the recipient of a sum of money amounting to between \$30 and \$40. Since the division of Mr. Hay's field, and the introduction of another pastor—Rev. Mr. Colwell, now of Watford—the churches have been considerably strengthened. The recent visit of Rev. Mr. McKay, of Kingston, has been of much practical benefit to the church in Forest. His eloquent sermons, replete with sound doctrinal statements and earnest exhortation, will not soon be forgotten.

THE anniversary of the London Missionary Society will be held May 30th. Sir William Muir will preside. Principal Fairbairn preaches the annual sermon, and there will be addresses by missionaries and others.