

ceeding, to submit first to censure, secondly to argument, and afterwards to a request for the facts.

Mr. Beecher in an address, took the ground set forth in their church manual, that "This church is an independent ecclesiastical body, and in matters of doctrines, order, and discipline, is amenable to no other organization." On the vote being taken on the amendment, it was found that some five hundred voted in the affirmative, and only twenty-five in the negative.

Another letter dated December 5th, was sent by the church of the Pilgrims and the Clinton Avenue Congregational Church, asking if they were to understand that Plymouth Church declined to unite with them in calling a council. To this an answer was sent that they denied that irregularities in administering discipline had taken place as charged, and that if they would state the points to be submitted to a council, they would promptly return to them the decision of the church. At the same meeting a resolution was passed interpreting the rule of their manual quoted above, as relieving all other churches from responsibility for the doctrine, order and discipline of their church; and their church from like responsibility in regard to other churches; asserting for themselves the right to judge in every case what fellowship, advice, or assistance may, according to the laws of Christ, be properly offered or received. Mr. Beecher, in advocating these principals said, that in every church there are two types, the aristocratic and democratic; shown in Episcopacy, by high and low; in Presbyterianism, by old and new; with the

Baptists, in close and open communion, and so on, resulting from principals which are involved in human nature. There was the high church Congregationalism, holding that a great degree of authority should be expressed by churches over each other through organized public sentiment; there was also the low church Congregationalism, or the democratic, which held to the local independence of each church. Plymouth Church from the first has belonged to this class.

Whatever the result of this controversy may be, it would seem that the two sister churches in attempting to deal with Plymouth Church for irregularities, have done so in an irregular manner. It would have been more in accordance with the spirit of the New Testament, if their pastors had first gone to Mr. Beecher personally, stating their impressions, and offering an opportunity for explanations. It was also brought out as a fact that their first letter of remonstrance requesting a committee for conference, was sent to Plymouth Church before it had been submitted to, and adopted by the other churches in whose names it was sent. The expression of opinions, and the arguments of that letter, certainly had the appearance at least, of prejudging the case. The threat of withdrawing fellowship from the church, was certainly needlessly offensive. It is stated, however, that the proceedings were not begun until after consultation with the best authorities on Congregational polity in Boston, Andover, and New Haven. The position of independence claimed by Plymouth Church, is certainly that main-