

THE
Canadian Independent.

VOL. XXII.

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER, 1875.

No. 3.

"HOW BEST TO PROMOTE THE EFFICIENCY OF OUR DENOMINATIONAL ACTION."

(*A Paper read at the Union Meeting, 1875.*)

BY THE REV. J. WOOD.

The first query that arises, as we read the title of the paper assigned to us, is, "Is the promotion of denominational ends desirable?" To which we answer both "Yes" and "No!" No, if by denominational zeal is meant the raising of a sectarian flag above the standard of the cross; or the love of church, or party, or ritual, is to be allowed to usurp the throne that belongs of right to Christ. Yes, if, on the other hand, we associate and work denominationally, each one in his own sphere, and after his own method, because he thinks it the best and most Scriptural way of doing the will of the Master. "Let no man glory in men." "God forbid," said the great Apostle, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

We are aware that in these days of ecclesiastical unions, and broad-church comprehension, it is becoming fashionable, in certain quarters, to decry denominational zeal, and try to make everybody love his neighbour's church better than his own. The "Church of the Future," in the view of some of the popular writers of the religious press, is to be, like the heaven of the Universalist, a sort of "Noah's Ark," in which "every unclean and hateful bird" and beast is to have a place with creatures of the most opposite nature. "Modes of faith," are to be abandoned to the "graceless zealots" of whom Pope wrote such a pretty couplet over a century ago. Religious knowledge and experience are no longer to be of any account, and sincerity and charity are to constitute the sole qualification for Christian fellowship. No man is to judge his brother, and not even "by their fruits" are we to know men. We submit, however, that when that day comes, all fellowship will be at an end, and that when denominational preferences are so uprooted as to leave us absolutely without choice as to where we worship, or what we hear, nothing worthy the name of Christianity will be left.

The truth is, that as God has not seen fit to make all our faces alike neither has He made us all to think and feel alike. We differ in taste, we differ in our sympathies, we differ in logical power. And we are convinced, that were it possible at once to unite in one vast ecclesiastical organization all the discordant elements of the Christian church, and to bring together in one huge conglomerate, Episcopalians and Independents, Presbyterians and Methodists, Baptists and Pædobaptists, the union would scarce outlive the day on which it was consummated. The Episcopalian would want his prayer-book again, the Methodist his