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SYNODS, CONFERENCES, AND THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION.

The Union meeting is again almost upon us! Many will read these pages with their faces already set towards the goodly city of Montreal, and enjoying in anticipation the pleasant reunion, and the generous and substantial hospitalities of the people of "Zion." Twelve months have passed since the most of them have met, and three times twelve since they last assembled in that commercial Metropolis on a similar occasion; and as they travel thither many a prayer will ascend to the throne of grace that the Master of assemblies may be in the midst of his servants, and make their gathering a blessing at once to hosts and guests. We have great reason to hope, from the unusual amount of religious interest that has been manifest in many of the churches during the past winter, that it will prove so. Only let us ask for it in the name of Jesus, believing, and we shall have it.

The question is not unfrequently put to us, and sometimes by persons connected with our own denomination, 'What do you do at the Union meeting?' Occasionally the conjecture is hazarded that the Union is just a Congregational Conference, or Synod, bearing another name, but with objects and powers very similar to those of other religious Bodies. These ecclesiastical gatherings, held every spring, are, for the most part, "Church Courts,"—the supreme Judicatories of the denominations to which they severally belong. They meet to *legislate* for the churches; to station, or remove ministers; to hear "appeals" from the decisions of lower courts; to issue "injunctions" and "inhibitions;" and to declare with authority what is, and what is not to be believed and taught, and in what way Divine worship shall be conducted. The fundamental principle of the Union, however, forbids that any such a thing should ever be attempted! Article III. of its constitution declares,—

"That this Union is founded on a full recognition of the distinctive principle of Congregational Churches, namely, the Scriptural right of every separate Church to maintain perfect independence in its government and administration; and, therefore, that the Union shall not assume legislative or administrative authority, or in any case become a court of appeal."