

Editorial.

FEDERATION OF EVANGELICAL CHURCHES.

Under the head of "Christian Work" our readers will find reference to the union negotiations that are now going on in Canada among the Methodists and among the Presbyterians. In a few years, it is fully expected that, for the Dominion of Canada, there will be but one Presbyterian Church and one Methodist Church. The movement that has begun in Canada will, without fail, extend till the same thing can be said of Great Britain and Ireland, though in the latter case the consummation of union, being beset with greater difficulties, is an event, perhaps, somewhat remote. Let us suppose, however, that both at home and abroad, the union of the different branches of each denomination should go on until at length each denomination is one body, and not as at present many fragments. What shall be the next stage of this union movement?

Without venturing to predict what may be, or even to assert what should be, one thing can be asserted without fear of contradiction—that there is very generally among Christians—a yearning after closer Christian brotherhood, not simply within the pale of the same denomination, but across the boundary line that separates the different denominations. This cry for a comprehensive Christian union may come, and does undoubtedly come, to some extent, from an indifference about doctrinal belief. Christian *life* and *work* is exalted by some people at the expense of Christian *doctrine*, saying with Pope.

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,"
"His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

It would augur ill for the future of the Church of Christ were this indifference about doctrine, which is in fact indifference about truth, to become a pre-

valent sentiment. Controversy and strife is sometimes a sign of life and health in the church. "The quarrels and divisions about religion were evils unknown to the heathen," says Lord Bacon, "because their religion consisted rather in rites and ceremonies than in any constant belief. But the true God has this attribute that He is a jealous God, and therefore his worship or religion will endure no mixture nor partner."

There is something, however, better than latitudinarianism and broad Churchism at the root of this desire for a federation of the Evangelical Churches.

It springs, partly from a growing apprehension of the formidable character of the enemies with which the Christianity of our day is confronted. It is confronted with a secularism that is busy teaching the artisans of the large cities that men can not know any more about the eternal world than they know about the politics of the moon, and that the only rational creed therefore is the three B's—Bread, Beef and Beer. It is confronted with a scientific materialism, that is busy teaching the educated classes that "the living thing differs from the non-living thing, not in quality or essence or kind, but merely in degree" and that death therefore is an eternal sleep. It is confronted by a Romanism, whose deadly wound is healed, and which has still all the unscrupulous ambition, all the despotic heartlessness, all the stern discipline, all the sleepless vigilance of the Imperial city that from its seven hills once ruled the nations with a rod of iron. It is confronted, and it is perhaps the worst enemy of all, with a self-sufficient indifferentism that says to the minister of religion, as the Glasgow cobbler said to Dr. Chalmers, "I have no time to listen, go ben and talk with the wife about these subjects." Confronted with