

the weak and the sick on the part of the Aborigines of our forests, is one of the most potent checks on their numerical increase, and a similar course on our part, is operating most disastrously upon Canadian Congregationalism.

Are we not inconsistent also in regard to our justly-cherished principle of purity of communion? Has there not been a want of caution and faithfulness in the organisation and composition of some of our churches? Has not our fewness and feebleness tempted us but too successfully in some instances to accept of nominal additions which have not been real accessions? Are we sufficiently earnest in insisting upon evidence of heart-renewal and peace with God in candidates for church-fellowship? Can we point confidently to the practical working of purity of communion among us, as compared with the lax course adopted by some other denominations? A spiritual increase is the only *true* increase. The elongation of a dead body is not a symptom of vitality.

Again, we are accustomed to boast of the elasticity of our system, and its capability of adopting modifications and improvements from other systems. It is excessive conservatism, ignoble prejudice, or overweening self-complacency, that makes us so chary of *doing* anything of the kind? Can we learn nothing from the exhibitions of practical common sense made by our brethren of other denominations? Beyond a disposition on the part of some among us to imitate the Episcopalians in their use of a Liturgy, we appear extremely reluctant to copy from our neighbours. Should we begin to think of manufacturing crutches if we were not growing lame? Is it certain that progress of this kind does not resemble that said to be made at times by the crab? May not a keen-eyed, right-minded observer detect in this Liturgical tendency, a movement even *worse* than that of the crab? "*Latium tendimus*"! Can we borrow nothing good of Presbytery,—of Methodism? Is the best we can do, "to marry immortality to death?" In the name of all the living members of the Congregational family, I venture meekly, yet firmly, to forbid the ban!s!

The last obstacle to progress, existing in ourselves, which I shall detain you to mention, is *want of union*. There is a great lack of this, first and foremost, in the local church. I do not refer to the existence of actual strife. Happily, there is very little of *that*. But union is not the mere absence of contention and division, it is the existence of positive and cordial Christian love. Is the prevalence of this obvious, and abounding in our midst? Or, though existing in a degree, is it latent, microscopic and homeopathic?

We could hardly expect it to be otherwise in the almost entire absence of any specific means of cultivating a warm-hearted Christian fellowship. Few of our churches have any stated meeting in which there is freedom of conversational intercourse enjoyed by the members, or an opportunity of forming and fostering a *religious* acquaintance with one another. Our prayer-meetings are too stiff and formal, and altogether there is a sad lack of the "communion of saints" among us. It is astonishing and mournful how little fellow-members of the same church (and it by no means a large one) will be found on enquiry to know of each other *as Christians*. Week after week they meet in the same sanctuary,—month after month they sit down together at the same communion-table and yet remain total strangers to each other's religious experience and history. They visit each other now and then, but talk almost wholly on secular topics, and it is well if the religious portion of the conversation be not mere tattling—if not evil-speaking. Brethren, the spiritual members of our churches are pining and languishing in religious solitude, for want of some meeting in reference to which the attendants may say,—