

CONCERNING CONGREGATIONAL COLDNESS.

Nobody in this part of the world needs to be told that the year 1887 came in with a cold wave. Preachers who drive fifteen or twenty miles between stations are quite aware that the first Sabbath of the year was cold enough to freeze the enthusiasm out of almost anybody. Perhaps that cold Sabbath was sent early in the year to remind congregations that a minister who has to drive fifteen or twenty miles every Sabbath should have a fur coat. That may have been one reason why the day was so cold. Congregations whose pastors have to drive every Sabbath for a long distance, in all kinds of weather, will please take a hint. A splendid fur coat can be had for about \$60. A coat of that kind is both useful and ornamental. It is useful, because a perfect protection against cold, and ornamental, because a very ordinary-looking brother looks well in a long fur coat, when the collar is turned up. The principal reason why he looks so well is because you don't see much of him. No congregation need expect much prosperity if its minister has to drive between his stations all winter without a good fur coat. The cold chills him, enfeebles him, paralyzes him. The eloquence freezes up in him, and the people don't get it. Their minister becomes cold physically, and there is some danger lest the people become cold in a worse sense than physically.

There is such a thing as *congregational* coldness. It may be detected in various ways. One good way is to use the statistical report in the annual returns as a thermometer. By examining this thermometer, especially the columns which show the amounts contributed to missions, you may easily discover the amount of evangelical warmth in any congregation. In some the spiritual temperature is high, and the contributions are correspondingly liberal. In some the temperature is about zero, and the figures in the columns for missions are low. In a few congregations the mercury is thirty degrees below zero, and these generally give one or two dollars each to send the Gospel to the heathen.

A newspaper reporter was sent to the North-West to write up the first Riel rebellion. For some reason or other "copy" was not forthcoming for a considerable time. When asked for the reason, the pencil-driver is reported to have said that his lead pencil froze so hard out there that no marks could be made with it. Fact or fiction, that pencil illustrates the reason why some columns in the statistical report are blanks. The congregations are frozen so hard that they give nothing to fill in the columns with. The statistical report is a capital thermometer, and on the whole gives a fairly correct estimate of the amount of evangelical warmth in a congregation. In some cases apparent coldness may be the result of entire want of

system in collecting. The trouble is want of organization rather than want of warmth; but while this may be true in a few cases, as a rule, where there is warmth it will show itself.

Congregational coldness may easily be detected without the use of the statistical thermometer. One good way is to attend the public service on Sabbath. Everybody knows—that is everybody who attends church—that churches have an atmosphere peculiarly their own. Go into some churches, and everything is cold, freezing cold. The usher at the door is cold, and gives you a chilling reception. You sit down in a pew beside somebody, perhaps a lady, who seems to be an animated iceberg. The choir gets up to prelude a little, and they seem like a collection of icebergs. Each one resembles a squeaking iceberg. Then the preacher comes in, and from his appearance suggests that he is a clerical iceberg. The moment he opens his mouth you see that his appearance did not belie him. He reads coldly, prays coldly, preaches coldly. The whole performance is cold. It may be faultless in other respects, but it is so intensely cold that it cannot do any good. There is no evangelical fervour—no Gospel warmth—no touch of nature that warms the heart. The whole service is of the ice icy. There is no soul in it. It has no heart power, and does little or no good. The preacher is a human iceberg, and you are glad when he gets through. You go home, feeling rather wicked, and wonder what churches are kept up for, any way.

You go into another church in which the atmosphere is entirely different. The usher gives you a warm welcome. Without being obsequious he shows you into a pew in a friendly manner. The occupants of the pew make room for you, or give you a book, or show you some other little civility which makes you feel you are welcome. The choir puts heart power into the singing. The preacher comes in, and you see at a glance that he is human. There is a peculiar something in his voice and manner which tells you he is a man, but a man who wishes to help his fellowmen. His reading of the opening hymn and the scriptures help to put you in a good frame of mind. The long prayer, instead of being wearisome, lifts you up and brings you near your heavenly Father and your elder Brother. The sermon comes, and the warm evangelistic truth goes right home to your heart. There was something there for you, though you were a stranger. As the service proceeds, your cares become lighter, your faith stronger, and you leave, feeling that it was a good thing to worship in that church.

What made the difference between these two churches? The difference was in the spiritual atmosphere. The one was cold, the other warm. What made the atmosphere of the one warm, and the atmosphere of the other so cold? The Gospel. A church in which the Gospel is fully, faithfully and earnestly