

get, and we need wisdom too, that we do not follow mere will-o'-the-wisps leading us into bogs and darkness.

Our friend Mr. Allworth has been calling attention to some very mean aspects of church life. Truly they are mean enough. If they are common they are a reproach to the churches that have developed them. If the churches have much of such "wood, hay and stubble" as that, it is a sad commentary on our high professions.

But are these things generally so? Are there not many other considerations bearing in the case?

I think there are. Why, for example, should persons leave a church in which they find true fellowship and edifying ministry, to join another in which they have no certainty of finding either? Do you answer, Congregational principles? Then let us speak plainly and say that Congregational principles *per se* are no guarantee either of sound preaching or quickening fellowship; yet these beyond doubt are the vital things. It is at their soul's peril that men neglect them.

What have we seen in Canada of late years? A pastor of a prominent Congregational church living in open adultery. Another pastor of a large church known as an open frequenter of saloons and bar rooms. Both of these have disappeared from the scene. Let us be thankful for that, but they were both for a time *bona fide* pastors of Congregational churches.

Would it have been right for any Christian man to leave an Episcopal or a Presbyterian church, in which he heard the truth preached and enjoyed fellowship with devout souls, to join himself to a church under such guidance as that?

Are there not to-day members of Congregational churches which deny the Lord that bought them? Non-orthodox you say. Very true. But they are Congregational, pure and simple, and if we talk of freedom this sort develops it to a far higher degree than we do. Now if Congregationalism simply as an ecclesiastical system is to be followed wherever we find it, then in a place where there is no other sort than a Unitarian church a man is bound to join himself to that rather than to a Presbyterian or a Methodist, however Godly a ministry and fellowship they may have. Is this a conclusion that will hold? Most of us would revolt from it. The truth is, to a large

extent, Congregational churches originally drew men out of other systems by the force of spiritual attraction. Other churches were dead. There was neither active truth nor fellowship in them. But the spiritual forces of true preaching and lively fellowship are powerful magnets. Drawn by these, men came out and formed churches on the basis of pure communion and sound doctrine.

But the time may come when the position is reversed. It is the Congregational church which is dead, and the others which are alive. In that case the same spiritual forces will draw men out, and keep them from going in. How can it be otherwise? Few men can have moved much amongst the churches of England and Canada without seeing instances of both kinds. What then is the conclusion? I think not that we should, when needful, (and if certainly is needful at some times and in some places,) go back to first principles, and that when we get back we should stay there.

With a holy ministry in which no man with stains on his character can find place for a lay, with a membership of holy persons working with the pastor; with energetic setting forth, and that with no uncertain sound, of biblical doctrine in its breadth and fulness of application; these, coupled with reasonable sense in administering church affairs, will find men ready to be drawn in, and kept in, now as ever.

G. HAGUE.

Montreal, January 22nd.

THE SEEDLINGS UNDER THE BRICK.

The power of seeds in germinating to force their way through hard clods is very well known. There is however a limit to this power, and some seeds never get through the hard substances that cover them. Some are retarded for a long time and retain their vitality till in some way the incubus is lifted off them, some perish and never make a plant.

A man once never had a fine and fertile soil in his garden in which he determined to plant some seed for trees in the future. He accordingly planted an acorn, a beech-nut, and an apple seed. The seeds were each good with a vital germ and under proper conditions would produce a tree. But over each seed he firmly placed a brick. The apple seed sprouted, sent out roots, struggled hard for air and sunlight, retained its vitality for a long time and forced itself against the brick, but could not raise it, nor penetrate it, and was