

# THE CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

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## UNION NOTES.

THE meetings just closed in London, Ontario, in connection with the Union, are by general consent declared to have been the best and most practical witnessed or enjoyed for many years. Certainly there was manifest harmony. Important changes were not merely acquiesced in but made. And the great interest shown by the friends in London, leaves little to desire as the whole pass under review.

A *résumé* of the work done we purpose to give. The Year Book will contain the official minutes. There were few speeches to record, but a practical spirit prevailed, and we anticipate large results from the gathering.

THE thirteenth annual meeting of the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec held its opening session in the Congregational church at London, on the evening of June 6th. Mr. Wm. Hay, of Scotland, Ont., was the preacher. His subject:—"How to fill empty churches." His text, Luke xiv. 23, "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in." Mr. Hay referred to his presence at the ordination of the Rev. Edward Ebbs over forty years ago in London. Among those who took part were Revs. W. Allworth and W. F. Clarke. Much progress had been made in London and in the churches since then—yet onward should we press.

Mr. Hay emphasizes "Compel them to come in," and presses the duty of Christian propaganda. In this essentially church work the compulsion must be the sweet persuasive power of the Fatherhood of God and of the Son's redemptive love. There can be little doubt but that the churches are seeking for this sweet persuasive power. Need may exist however for reminding of judgment also; though it is God's strange work, it is a work nevertheless.

"Thus seeking," Mr. Hay remarks:

We have been accustomed to hear that numbers are not strength, better to have little and of the right kind, a few well-trained soldiers than a large undisciplined army. Let us not be over cautious; we must enlist soldiers before we can drill them, get scholars before we can educate them. Have we not been proceeding upon the theory—survival of the fittest—taking the bold, the strong, the bright, and letting the weak perish, for whom Christ died. Have we not spent too much time in sorting, as Gideon his men?

Is not the church intended for other than fighting men, a place for the weak, and halt, and sick? May not the imperfect and the sinful come into the helpful society and watchful care of the church? May not all ages and attainments, the hungry and naked, the bewildered and lost, be proper subjects for the church to aid, by sympathy, prayer and instruction? How otherwise can they hope to succeed in the difficult task of rising to a higher spiritual life? Is there any reason for the church's existence apart from a work of this kind?

But it may be replied: A man must be *born again*, he must be regenerated, must be converted before he comes in, for "the church is a congregation of faithful men." This leads me to consider the subject of *conversion* in the light of Scripture teaching. Have we not repelled the young and discouraged the consciously unworthy by our views and expositions of this doctrine? Have we not sanctioned a type of conversion which has appeared too heroic, dramatic and mystical, for many of the most humble and sincere of our hearers? Many and clear evidences of a great change have been sought; deep waters of penitence; powerful convictions of sins; billows of wrath endured, coming out at hell's gate, into a flood of light, peace and joy. No other experience than this has been thought worth having or relating by some, as affording a sure resting place for eternity. Are not many of our most sensitive hearers waiting for such a sound, through and through conversion: such a forcible entering into the kingdom? No doubt there are thousands of our hearers who are really in Christ, yet waiting for this conventional kind of change of heart. We must gather them in so soon as they express a wish. The primitive churches did this. We make them wait until they are of age, or until they prove themselves worthy. Is this an improvement upon the ancient mode? On the same day, putting them upon probation, we express a suspicion of their sincerity, and, while we charge them to make haste very slowly, they are caught away by others, who enroll their names instanter, and our most devout inquirers become at once the most exemplary members of their societies.

In these enquiries there is needed suggestiveness. We have heard much regarding the