

THE

Canadian Independent.

VOL. XIII.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER, 1866.

No. 5.

THE GAPS IN THE RANKS.

On the 31st of August, 1863, we happened to be in Brooklyn, Long Island. It was shortly after the disgraceful negro riots in New York, and several regiments from the army of the Potomac had been hastily ordered to that city to preserve the peace. They had just fought in the battle of Gettysburg, and the other engagements which took place during Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania. On the last day of the month the troops were paraded in order to making out the pay-rolls, and a very affecting spectacle did that simple ceremony present. The several companies of a regiment were formed as if consisting of their full strength, but with this result: at the right hand stood an officer with a few men in line, then a gap, then one man, then another gap, then another man, then a longer gap, and away out at the extreme left the last solitary man. The weather-beaten faces and the ragged and motley uniforms told their own story of hardships in the wilderness and perils in the field. But those empty spaces, how much more eloquently did they speak of the sick, the captured, the wounded, and the dead! The eye saw only the remnant on parade, the heart saw the missing ones in the hospital, the prison, and the grave.

That long line of a few widely-separated men comes back again to our memory, as we look at the condition of our ministerial ranks in these Provinces, especially in Canada. The nature of the field keeps most of us far apart from each other. But other causes have been at work. The consequences, present and prospective, are very serious. It behoves us to look the matter fairly in the face, to detect the reasons for these losses, and, if possible to find a remedy.

Death has said to two of our brethren, within a month, "Come up higher." Our little band of labourers had been marvellously "holden in life" for a long time,—the Widows' Fund was seven years without a claim,—but now the King is mustering the weary veterans out of the service. Two ministers who were at the Union Meeting on the 14th of June, were laid in their