

THE UNION MEETING OF 1866.

In addition to the record given in our last number of the transactions of the Congregational Union of Canada and the associated societies, a few words of comment on the spirit and results of their recent meetings seem to be called for, in order that those who were not present may have a more complete idea of the occasion.

As to *numbers*, the meeting was smaller than usual, especially in delegates. There were forty ministerial members present, but only twenty-four representatives of the churches. We suppose we may thank those universal disturbers, the Fenians, for reducing the attendance, for, in addition to the usual difficulties of leaving home and business for a week, many, who might otherwise might have been at the meeting, were or had been "at the front," or were left short-handed through having sons or *employés* there.

The *spirit* of the meetings, however, was good—very good. In the devotional services, brethren drew near to God and to one another. In the business discussions, there was a free handling of the matters which came up for decision, and the result was a general agreement in the results arrived at, and an increasing degree of confidence in each other. The public meetings were also of unusual interest.

We gladly express the feeling which we heard on every hand, that at this meeting the Congregational cause in Canada showed itself to have "touched the bottom" and "turned the corner." Various depressing influences had been at work for several years past, and were felt to paralyse exertion in every direction. But those influences are being surmounted. There is a growing conviction of the value of our distinctive principles—that there is in them a power for good, an element of value in the christianisation of these colonies, which makes them worth contending for, and should forbid the absorption of these churches in the larger bodies around us. In our missionary movements the sense of internal power is waxing stronger, and the desire for independence becomes more irrepressible. Our missionary organization is in a shape requiring little or no alteration to enable it to run alone. Brethren found themselves unexpectedly unanimous upon the policy of first consolidating the work already in hand, and then looking at aggressive movements. We judge the conviction to be universal, that the time past may suffice for debates with the Colonial Missionary Society, and that there are but two alternatives open to us—to work with them quietly, or—to part. We look upon it as a matter of no slight consequence, that the necessity of increasing the salaries of pastors has forced itself prominently on the attention of the body. From the combined influence of the feelings and movements above alluded to, we look for an increase in the number of candidates for the ministry, and the consequent reinvigoration of the College. The Widows' Fund, in spite of the neglect of the majority of the churches, and the non-connection of so many ministers, is steadily gaining strength. And last, perhaps not least, the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT emerges from the Union meeting in ampler dimensions and on a firmer basis.

One feature of the late meeting we must not fail to notice, namely, a strong sense of the need of improvement in the mode of conducting business. We fully share, and have often expressed, the general feeling on this matter. Yet we are bound to say, that, having witnessed the proceedings of several ecclesiastical assemblies, to say nothing of municipal and parliamentary bodies, for entire freedom, yet courtesy and brotherliness, we have never seen our meet-