

THE CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

All communications for the Editorial, News of Churches, and Correspondence Columns should be addressed to the Managing Editor, Box 2648, P.O. Toronto.

Pastors and church officers are particularly requested to forward items for "News of the Churches" column.

TORONTO, THURSDAY, JULY 1st, 1880

THE Rev. John Burton, B.A., will take charge of the INDEPENDENT until the editor returns from England. Communications for the editor to be addressed as indicated above.

WE have received a letter from the Rev. E. Ireland, of Richmond, Michigan, asking why his application for a letter from the Union was laid over for a year. The Editor of the INDEPENDENT is not in a position to give Mr. Ireland the needed information. If he will write to Rev. John Wood, the Secretary of the Union, he will doubtless get the desired explanation.

THERE are many in Canada who have very kindly remembrances of the Rev. Prof. Chapman, now in Western College, England. His friends will be glad to hear of his success there. A recent letter from England says: "Mr. Chapman is very happy in his work, and much of the increase in numbers at Western College is to be attributed to the reputation he is making as an acute and original thinker. He deals with the theological difficulties of the day in a style which secures the confidence and satisfies the judgment of his students and enables them fearlessly to grapple with problems which sometimes lead to much stumbling and difficulty for the unwary. This should be said of all theological colleges, but is it so? Let the answer come."

THERE was some misunderstanding at the Union meeting concerning the reception of ministers from the States. Some thought that a letter from the State Association was necessary, others contended that only the minor Associations granted letters. The latter is the correct view, and Dr. Sturtevant in the "Advance," of June 10, incidentally refers to this matter. He says: "The Congregationalists of the Interior and the West have a nearly uniform system of State organizations. These Associations, as most of them are called, are organizations of ministers and churches. They rely for the standing of the ministers and the soundness of the churches entirely upon the warrant of the minor Associations. The minor Associations who never assume, and so far as I know never have attempted to assume, any ecclesiastical authority, or any function which belongs to mutual or ex-parte Councils, judge ministers and churches solely with reference to a place in their membership. The State Associations, admit all members of the minor bodies to membership."

ORGANIZED INDEPENDENCY.

THE Rev. Joseph King, Chairman of the Congregational Union, of Victoria, in his annual address delivered in April last, and published in the May number of the "Victorian Independent," made some remarks on the above topic that are of interest to our readers. It appears from the address that some in Australia and Canada are thinking in parallel lines. While some in our churches are wanting closer organization, there are many others who feel that our need is not more organization but more life, more of the Spirit's power. We have machinery enough, what we need is divine force and energy. Organization cannot give us this. It comes from above. However, as Mr. King puts the one side of the subject in a clear and forcible manner we let him speak here. He says:

The fact that Independency has thriven as it has during the past three centuries is a proof of the vitality which has existed in our churches. Unassisted by any central organization, our churches have sprung spontaneously from the soil, and have borne rich fruit.

The thousands of Congregational churches which exist to-day, spread all over the British empire, and in America and in other lands, afford unmistakable evidence that there has been life without united organization. This fact, especially at the present time, should not be forgotten. There are many who, acknowledging gratefully all the success which has been granted to us, are asking whether that success might not have been greatly increased if our human machinery had been more perfect. So persistently is this question being asked, so emphatically is it the question of the day in our churches, that in choosing a subject for this address I felt that the force of a necessity was laid upon me to say something about it.

ORGANIZATION.

Is there anything, then, in our Church polity to prevent an organized union of our forces for practical work? If such union is alien to our principles, I, for one, should begin to doubt whether, after all, our principles are so sound as we have fondly imagined. But I think it can be shewn that there is nothing in our traditional Independency to prevent such union. Facts, perhaps, supply the best proof of this. When the London Missionary Society was established, at the end of last century, it was an undenominational institution; but it soon assumed the character of a Congregational Society, and for many years it has been under the control of the Congregational churches of Great Britain. It is still, to a certain extent, undenominational in its working—not a few Presbyterian ministers are labouring under its auspices; but practically it is managed by Congregationalists, and mainly its agents and supporters are Congregationalists. We need not remind you of the great work this institution has accomplished. No foreign missionary society perhaps can point to greater triumphs, to more solid and extensive results. The area covered by our efforts is large. In India, China, Africa, Polynesia, Madagascar, our missionaries are labouring, and they have gathered many churches from the heathen population of these lands. But even supposing our success had been less than it has been, the very existence of such an institution supplies an answer to the question we are considering. This organized union, of which so much is being said at the present time, is no new idea. Not only has the idea been conceived before but for well nigh a century it has had a practical realization in connection with our churches. Organization is being spoken of as a new departure from the old lines of Independency. The word is repeated almost in a whisper, as though some great danger lurked beneath it. Instead, however, of being a new departure, it is but a new name for an idea with which we have been long familiar, and which has led to many practical results in our past history. Not only for mission work amongst the heathen has there been united effort. The Home-Missionary Society and the Colonial Missionary Society are examples of the same thing. The statement that organization for Christian work is alien to our principles, has therefore no foundation. Facts shew that Independent churches, as well as other churches, can combine to help each other in discharging common responsibilities, and that they can do this without in any way sacrificing the principles of Independency.

I know that the organization which is demanded at the present time is intended to be on a much more extensive scale than anything in the past. Be it so. If the lesser can be justified, on what ground can the larger, the more complete, be condemned? If Independents can combine to educate missionaries, and to send them forth to plant Christian churches in Central Africa, in the great cities of Asia, in the palm groves of the Pacific, on what ground can an objection be raised to a similar course being pursued in evangelizing the unenlightened in the cities and districts nearer home, and where the English language is spoken? Not only can no reasonable objection be urged to this course, but many of the strongest reasons can be assigned for the hearty and more thorough adoption of such a policy.

INDEPENDENCY AND CO-OPERATION.

Independency is not a repellent force. There is

nothing in our principles to drive our churches into selfish isolation. Rightly understood, our form of government is as favourable to combination and cohesion as systems whose organization rests upon extensive ecclesiastical legislation. From such legislation we claim absolute freedom. It is not to the authority of a Church court or convocation that we bow. Each separate church, we believe, may enjoy the guidance of Him whose will is the highest authority in spiritual things. "One is your Master, even Christ." But this belief does not make us independent of law. The very reverse. It makes us amenable to the most comprehensive, the highest, the most perfect law. We are independent of each other as the planets are; but there is a central sun from which we all derive our light. Each church is complete in itself, like the different vessels of a fleet; but we are not a fleet without an admiral, and His will is our law. There is a bond between our churches stronger than any of human invention, which not only draws us to each other, but which links us to Him who is head over all things to the Church; and from that highest voice in the universe there comes to us commands which we are pledged to obey. From every vessel in the fleet the admiral's flag is watched, and they fall into line when the signal to do so is given; and we, as churches, are to fall into line and put ourselves in battle array, because the signal at the mast-head of our flag-ship indicates that such united action is our Divine Leader's will. The mind of Christ, revealed by the Spirit of God to men of spiritual research and faith, is our standard in all things connected with our Church work and responsibility; and if we have read aright the expression of that mind, it calls us, especially at the present time, to gather closer together for the defence of His divine cause and the wider extension of His spiritual kingdom.

AMERICAN CONGREGATIONALISM.

IT is often said that Congregationalism has not made that progress in numbers that other denominations have, and this is instanced as a weakness in our Church polity. But there is another and a truer reason why Congregationalists are not numerically stronger than some other denominations. The "Victoria Independent," in a recent issue, puts the facts of the case well and truly when it says:

"If throughout the world we have not kept our relative position, of which we have never seen any proof whatever, it is certainly not to America that we would go to sing a dirge. The want of progress of American Congregationalism is—paradoxical as it may seem—to a large extent the glory of American Congregationalism. For, of all denominations, the Congregational was most faithful on the subject of slavery. New England—the stronghold of Congregationalism—was ever the deadly antagonist of slavery. Our free polity rendered church membership impossible in slave-holding states. The very democratic autocracy of Congregationalism was sedition under Southern laws. So effectively was one half of the country shut against us that, at the close of the Southern rebellion, there were only two, or at most three, Congregational churches in the slave states of the South—states where Methodism could number a million and a quarter of members. In America, as elsewhere, Congregationalism has suffered on account of fearless adherence to principles, and because her ministers and leaders have been men who dared to suffer for conscience sake. In Dr. Paton's paper there is the following quotation from John Whittier, with reference to the celebrated Dr. Hopkins, of Newport, the centre of the commercial interests of the American slave trade:—"It may well be doubted whether, on that Sabbath day, the angels of God in their wide survey of His universe looked upon a nobler spectacle than that of the minister of Newport rising up before his slave-holding congregation, and demanding, in the name of the Highest, the deliverance of the captive, and the opening of the prison-doors to them that were bound." When we remember the unfaithfulness of the Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations, as denominations, in the matter of slavery, and the abeyance in which the Bap-