

THE
CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

TORONTO, THURSDAY, APRIL 3rd, 1879.

A WORD TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

WITH the present number the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT begins its second quarter in its new shape. We think that this is a proper time to say a few words to our readers about it, and we say them.

Of the work which we have done in the twelve numbers already issued we need not speak at length. It speaks for itself. It is right that we should say this much, however:—While conscious of many imperfections, the editors and publisher, and contributors have tried to do their very best. They have wished and sought to make the paper a success in the truest sense of the term. And they rejoice that their efforts have been largely appreciated by the constituency to which they appeal. Letters of a commendatory character come to us all the while from all sections of the country. We could often fill a column or two, if we were so disposed, with our own praises, sung by those who peruse our pages.

But we do not think so much about the past as of the present and the future. We are anxious to advance—to make each number better than the preceding one. And in this we shall not fail if one condition be attended to. If we had a longer subscription list than we have, we could inaugurate and carry out vast improvements. We must make the paper pay its necessary expenses. We have no capital fund to draw upon. So we have been compelled to keep within very narrow bounds, too narrow altogether. Now, with even three or four hundred more readers, we would not be so restrained and hampered as we have been. We could launch out more boldly than we have done. This matter rests with our churches and our Church members. It is entirely in their hands. The Congregationalists of Canada can, if they will, sustain a first-class religious weekly. The question is, will they do it? Let all the Churches, let every member of every church say, "*We will!*" We know that we began this enterprise in an unfortunate season. We know that the times are hard and that money is scarce. But why should Christian men economize first of all in the department of Christian literature? We would say to all the members of our churches, You cannot afford to do without good reading matter; you cannot afford to shut yourselves out from the great religious world of the nineteenth century. Nor can you afford to shut yourselves out from the Canadian Congregational world. And we would affirm further, that there is hardly a member in any of our churches, who could not, if he were so minded, command annually the small sum which we ask for our paper. We fear—nay,

we know—that there are churches that have not done what they could do with comparative ease for us. We appeal specially to them now. Let there be an advance along the whole line. Let there be a general effort to secure subscribers. Those who do the work on the paper, whether in the editorial or publishing department, have no sinecure. But they will gladly do all that they have done and more too if they are only seconded and encouraged by their brethren. Their desire is simply to promote the best interests of Congregational Christianity in Canada. They put the question with all earnestness, and they will confidently look for a favourable response: Will the churches, will the members of the churches give them their hearty co-operation? Shall they have a longer subscription list?

LAXITY OR LIBERTY.

THE "Guardian" is sadly exercised about Congregationalism. It had a long article, recently, about our "Unscriptural Laxity." It has found a stray chip somewhere about the Rev. Baldwin Brown, and forthwith lectures us about our latitudinarianism. In its closing paragraph it asserts that—according to Mr. Brown—Independent Churches "may include Unitarians, Universalists, Materialists, and all grades of unbelievers; for no faith in God, Christ, Heaven or Hell is essential to a Congregational Church."

To defend the reputation of Baldwin Brown we have no need; it is well able to sustain itself. But we would seek to remove a sad mistake from the mind of the "Guardian," into which—let us hope—it has unwittingly fallen. Mr. Brown, if we rightly understand him, holds no such view as that attributed to him in the sentence quoted above. What are the facts? When Mr. Brown accepted the chairmanship of the English Congregational Union, he found an instance—as he thought—of repression of the right of individual research, and the right of individual expression. And he warned his brethren against narrowing the rights of freedom to think and to speak. His words were misunderstood, we grant, both by many of his own brethren, and by those in other Christian communions. Mr. Brown would grieve as much as the kindly editor of the "Guardian" over a man's departure from faith in God or Christ, or any other Scriptural doctrine. But, he would say, that were a man to so depart from Scriptural truth, Christ—the Church's lawgiver and judge—is the person to whom the errorist is responsible, and not a number of fallible men who are self-constituted judges of orthodoxy. And, in this view, our English brother is in full sympathy with the genius of Congregationalism in its best form.

Facts are sometimes far better witnesses than theories. The theory of the "Guardian" is, that independent Churches have a natural

tendency to laxity and heresy. The facts as written on the leaves of history are, that independent Churches have kept within the orbit of Scriptural truths, and within the influence of the Divine Cross-bearer, as perfectly as any other Churches, and better than a few. The fact is, that our liberty has not made any more—if as many—errorists, than the restriction of other systems of Church-polity. There is as wide-spread and as profound a faith "in God, in Christ, in Heaven, and in Hell" among Congregational Churches as among any other. And Mr. Brown simply holds that he can trust that liberty still to develop truth and godliness. He has found it work well, and he can trust it yet. For himself, he would rather permit a man unfettered to consult Jesus Christ, than to see him turn to synod, or conference, or creed. And in accepting liberty, Mr. Brown accepts it with all its accompanying dangers. In this he is logical.

Liberty has dangers, in the body-politic, as well as in the Church. But so many are theoretically champions of liberty, like the "Guardian," while practically they are afraid of it. For ourselves, in Church or in State, we prefer liberty with all its possibilities of danger, to slavery with all its boasted quietude. The Methodist body—for which the "Guardian" caters—dare not trust its ministers to think for themselves, so it binds them up to Wesley's notes. And yet it has its deflections from Scriptural truth. Congregationalism is not afraid to allow men to think for themselves; and it can point to its record with pardonable pride, that it has not left the Cross of Cavalry, nor turned away its eye from the Christian's Heaven. We have had a lecture from the "Guardian" on "Unscriptural Laxity." Now for one on "Unscriptural Dogmatism."

HOSPITALS AND REFUGES.

IN order to bring our series of articles based on Mr. Langmuir's report to a close, we group under one heading all the benevolent institutions not strictly Provincial, but receiving aid to a greater or less extent from the Government. These are Hospitals, Houses of Refuge, Orphan Asylums, and Magdalen Asylums. There are twelve hospitals, twelve houses of refuge, twenty-one orphan asylums, and five Magdalen asylums. Some of these are Protestant, some are Roman Catholic, and some are general. They are all under the eye of the Government Inspector; and they are aided partly "according to their works" and partly in proportion to the income they receive from other sources. The Charity Aid Act provides that every hospital so entitled shall receive twenty cents per day for each patient, and a further sum of ten cents per day provided such further aid does not exceed one-fourth of the amount received during the preceding year from all sources other than the Province. Where such