

## Our Contributors.

### OUR TRUST.



AS Congregationalists, we inherit a birthright of great value. That boon from above had to be, nevertheless, bravely contended for by our denominational ancestors, who at a great price obtained this freedom; though, in this sense, it is our privilege to be free born. The battles our fathers fought against ecclesiastical dominance and suppression of free scriptural interpretation were not merely for themselves and their contemporaries, but also for all time. They, like Abraham, looked forward by faith, and rejoiced to believe that in later days the results of their victories would be continued; that each family and each congregation, however small, would fearlessly worship God as their own consciences would dictate, and manage their own internal church affairs without any external intrusion, interference or control. The days of liberty of that character have come, and come to stay, and enable us to raise our standard in full view of both suppressor and suppressed in matters of faith and polity.

Our numbers in Canada, compared with those of some other denominations, are not large, and none have accused us of manifesting an extravagant aggressive spirit. Yet we are told that our proportionate increase in the Dominion compares favorably with that of other bodies. We do not pretend to concentrate our efforts to increase our numbers, but we exercise a leavening influence on and, as far as permitted, co-operate in Christian work with all the followers of our one Master. We believe our existence has been exemplary and modifying in its effects on the application of some rigid rules existing in other bodies. Therefore, we have been and still are looked upon by those "dressed in a little brief authority," as a standing

menace against any stern discipline which church powers might otherwise deem it wise to inflict on insubordinate children. Although Congregational influence is admitted by many of those affected to have been salutary in its effects hitherto, yet there is evidently a fear, hidden or expressed, as to whereunto this may grow if our influence be not in some way checked? Here, happily, we have no legal barriers such as have been exercised in the Old Land to obstruct our progress, and if we had we see that they might be to a great extent ineffectual. For in spite of all legal restraint and undue influence the British Isles have produced according to statistics in the last Year Book 4,868 churches of our order, besides mission stations.

Congregationalism is, moreover, the child of persecution and oppression. These have, in the past, seemed to be its vital breath, as they have been its native air. Like Israel in Egypt, the more it has been persecuted the more it has grown: for neither conflict nor poverty will stamp out the life of genuine Congregationalism either in the individual or in the community. If the influence of our churches is to be weakened, that debility must be from internal languor. Our weak spots are our own wavering children of all positions. Such invite the assiduous attention of antagonists of full church liberty. These use tactics to win over such weaklings to their ranks. As in the Lord's army under the command of Gideon, there are occasionally some, even among ourselves, that are "fearful and afraid" when called upon to contend against conflicting circumstances. They may have put on our distinctive armor and yet lack the courage of their profession, and so "in time of temptation fall away," because they feel unable to face manfully our uphill struggle during our numerical "day of small things" in this Dominion. Often probably, conscious of their lack of personal force needed to sustain steadfastly their position, apart from an ecclesiastically organized arm of flesh, such look in their crisis to such a refuge, and beseechingly cry, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." They give up their trust, the burden which they may not have felt to have at any time lain very heavily on them. They may be welcomed and paraded elsewhere as exemplary