

OPEN COUNSEL COLUMN.

MR. EDITOR,—Could you not set apart one or two pages of the *INDEPENDENT*, for an "Open Counsel Column," such as there is in the English *Homilist*? To make the most of the space it could be cast into double columns and set up in small type, which would render it capable of containing all the "theological notes and queries" of the brethren. Such a department we think is greatly needed, and would be, doubtless, most highly prized.

In these times of mental commotion and spiritual upheaving, when the old land-marks are being removed and the faith of many shaken, doubts breed fast, difficulties rise thick, and a subtle, all-pervading infidelity prevails. The people read in our periodical literature the thoughts of the best thinkers on all subjects—secular, sacred and scientific—and in much of that they have administered to them unwholesome and erroneous doctrine. It is finely said; it is pleasing; it is plausible; and it is urged with all the fervour of irrefragable proof and clearest demonstration; so that he must needs be a brave man who would say, nay! so many echo, yea! And the weak ones fall and the strong ones fear.

Some watchmen on their towers may note the issues of the conflict and be pondering the mode of retrieval, the way of redemption for the lost—let these speak out! Exchange thoughts, knowledges and experiences—lend mutual help. Let current religious thought and opinion be canvassed—cautiously, yet fearlessly and manfully. No ill can come of it, but great good—good to the minister by new light thrown on the subject dealt with—good to the people through him.

We, Congregational clergy, are too still and close, too much wrapt up in our own plot of vineyard and its care—too incommunicative. We move along quietly, gathering as we best can our soul gear and mental garnishing, and keep it all to ourselves.

Sir Thomas Browne's plan was better and nobler, "I make not my head a grave, but a treasury of knowledge; I intend no monopoly, but a community in learning: I study not for my own sake only, but for their's that study not for themselves." Many brethren could solve problems and unravel gnarled knots, which perplex many, by a few words. Are not many of the brethren like flint that needs to be stricken and smitten to give forth light? Let the cold steel strike the fire-bearing flint, that light may shine!

Hoping that the "Open Counsel Column" will commend itself to your best judgment and that of the brethren,

I am, yours, &c.,

London, 17th September, 1867.

JAMES A. R. DICKSON.

[In the *C. I.* for August, 1866, in an article on "Betterments," it was said—"We shall be happy to find room for Notes and Queries—if our correspondents wish to ask questions, and will aid us in giving answers. This department, if properly conducted, may be very serviceable." We are of the same mind still. The question of typographical arrangement is quite subordinate, and can be decided according to the requirements of the case: We have already eight or nine departments, and rather shrink from adding to the number of formal divisions, within our narrow limits. Else, we should have departments for the Sunday School, the Ministry, Psalmody, Christian Benevolence, Missionary Intelligence, and what not? Our correspondent and all others may be assured that brief and pertinent communications on the