

## Our Contributors.

### HAVE WE TOO MANY THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS.

BY KNOXIAN

A few years ago this question would have seemed the very climax of absurdity. To some it may seem absurd now. All the same it will stand a little discussion.

There are in the Presbyterian Church in Canada about three hundred young men in training for the ministry. Owing to the peculiar way in which the college work of the Church is brought before the Assembly it is not easy to get the exact figures. One of the reports for last year does not give the number of students in attendance. Knox reports the number in the Preparatory Department in addition to the number in theology, but does not give the number in Toronto University known to be studying with a view to the ministry. Some day we may have a Standing Committee on Theological Education that will lay the facts and figures before the Church in a condensed form. That course is followed in regard to our mission and other work. Why it is not done in regard to our college work is one of those mysteries of Presbyterian conservatism that nobody can understand.

Taking the reports of the last Blue Book as a basis on which to work we may assume that we have three hundred young men in training for the ministry. Our own opinion is that the number is considerably over three hundred. Count the number in the Preparatory Department of Knox and the number taking an Arts course in the Universities with a view to the Presbyterian ministry and the total will certainly run a long way over three hundred. To be safe, however, let us say three hundred.

Three hundred students in a three years course of study means an addition of nearly one hundred to the regular ministerial staff. Does the Church need any such addition? Is there room, work and bread for any such increase?

We forgot to say in the right place that we are discussing this question on its human side exclusively. That the Holy Spirit will not put it into the heart of too many men to study for the ministry is a fact, the truth of which may be assumed. Still the question has a human side as all such questions have, and looking at the human side we think it may be assumed that our supply of ministers has quite caught up to the demand if it has not left the demand a little in the rear.

To the number of ministers we train must be added the number that the General Assembly will persist in receiving from other churches. Just why the Supreme Court should receive any ministers at the present time and put them in a position to jostle our own young men in the vacancies, is another of those mysteries that can be explained only on the theory that we Presbyterians have an invincible habit of doing "that which was done before."

The number of ministers who from any cause cease work each year and leave a vacancy is not large. Supposing we say it is fifty, and perhaps it is not half that number. There would still be an increase of fifty to the ministerial roll. Do we need that number? Yes, if the population of the country were increasing as it increased some years ago. And here is the nerve of the whole question. The number of students in training has increased steadily, if not by leaps and bounds, but the population of the newer parts of the Dominion has not increased rapidly, while in some of the older parts congregations have doubled up, and one minister is doing the work on which two were engaged a few years ago. A rapid increase of population in Manitoba and the North-West Territories would soon send the demand away ahead of the supply.

It is needless to say that the problem of supply and demand is not peculiar to the

ministry. The other professions have been training men in numbers out of proportion to the increase of the population. In fact, production in everything for some reason or another is getting ahead of consumption.

Several things seem evident. There is no further need of men from other churches and other countries, and if not entirely stopped, "short cuts" and "special cases" should be discouraged.

Natural qualities and aptitudes should be considered in early examinations as well as literary qualifications.

The wretched fallacy that a man must be a minister in order to serve the Lord well, should be driven out of the heads of a certain kind of young men. Many congregations could get a fairly good minister much more easily than a good session or a good Sabbath school superintendent.

It seems plous to wish for a great number of ministers. Glance over at the United States, see the large number of stranded clergymen who are forced to earn a living as book agents, "insurance men" and in other secular ways, and say if an over-stocked ministry is a good thing for the Church.

See the ignoble scramble for every vacancy there and in our own country, and say if it is not degrading to the ministry and to religion itself.

We imagine we hear some one say something about the large number of students in Scotland. That is an old story. Scotland sends her licentiates to all the colonies, and the colonies belt the globe.

Scotland has tutorships by the hundred for "sticket ministers." Canada has practically none. Scotland has assistant pastors. There are not a dozen congregations in our churches that could or would engage an assistant pastor. One of the very best things in the world for many of our young men would be employment as assistant pastors. But we cannot afford it.

There is enough in this contribution to furnish material for some thinking.

### HOME MISSIONS.—D. G. McQUEEN'S ARTICLE.

BY REV. JAMES BUCHANAN.

As a fellow-laborer with D. G. McQueen in the Home work of the Church, I must express appreciation of his straightforward signed article in THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN of Feb 12th, and my "disappointment" at the article "A Rejoinder" by "S." in the issue of March 4th.

Mr. McQueen's point was well put, and none of our young men can get over the fact that the salaries in the West are small, the work abundant, and the need great. "Information" can be given, and at two Assemblies Mr. McQueen told stories of Western work that went home to every listening and ready heart. But his letter was not intended to give "information." It was intended to point out duty; not the duty of "every minister who settles in an Eastern charge," but the duty of our young men to come West to spend "one, two or even three years" before settling in the East.

The difference between Home and Foreign work is just here. A man going to Foreign work is expected to make *that* his life work. A man coming to mission work in the West is not expected to stay longer than "one, two, or three years." The Home Mission Committee make their appointments for "two years." The Foreign Mission Committee sends men without naming a time at the expiry of which their appointment must be reconsidered. The truth is that no church of the Presbyterian order could send her men to do its Home mission work without limiting the time of service. A more undesirable position for a minister to be placed in it is hard to conceive than to be home missionary in our Western work. Some one asks why?

The policy of settlement has made great distances between homesteads and hamlets.

It has aggravated poverty and added expense to every settler. It has made selling and buying serious problems. The farmer can only sell to two or three buyers, and he must buy from only two or three storekeepers. When poverty pinches hard he has no alternative. He must trade where he runs an account.

It must also be remembered that Ontario or Old Country people, do not leave their old homes because of their overflowing exchequer. To found a new home costs more money than new settlers bring with them. It is all "outgo" for a long time, (from one to four years) before there is any "income." The "outgo" is always large for every condition—economic, political, commercial, social—is arranged to make it so. For the same reasons, the "increase" is always smaller than it should be, judged by cheap land, fertility of soil, fewer expenses. To these must be added difficulties attendant upon building up every new country. Frost is blamed for much loss and no doubt rightly so. Ignorance, it seems to me, of capabilities of the country is a far more potent cause of loss than frost or other climatic conditions. Knowledge comes by experience and experience costs a lot of money, hardship, heartburning; too often costs men their character and families their homes.

The missionary settles in a district where the wealth is not evident, but where the hardships are hydra-headed. Some of the people help him all they are able, some hinder as much. Most care no more about religion than do their cows. Interest in their salvation they evidence none. A church costs money, and that is a sufficient reason to have none of it. The liquor interest is everywhere, and has to be counted on. Let the minister oppose it, in a small district, he lessens his butter and bread. Often, too, four or five families of relatives settle near each other, and they run the Church. Offend one, and all turn on the minister, and he must leave. It matters much in a congregation of ten families that one is offended. Then there are the many petty jealousies arising through the site of a new school house, a new church, a new manse, whose daughter plays the organ or sings a solo; whose house the missionary frequents oftener than others, very often give rise to trouble; who are elected elders, or managers, or trustees;—in short, every missionary must count on all these and many more in making up his salary. Every petty quarrel costs the church money.

Another difficulty a missionary has to face is the ever recurring one of the mission returns. "Increase" must be the word in regard to money. The minister is a spiritual officer. If he fails in getting the people to give he is "a failure." Conditions are considered no doubt, but the one condition, success, has not been reached and the missionary has failed. No doubt some are really failures, and the people mark their appreciation by not giving. But my contention is, that in a new country, this test of success does not always hold good. Now, in Foreign work, or French work, money is not an essential to success. It plays no part in Church statistics. The salary comes from the committee at home. In Home work a grant comes from the committee, the rest of the salary from the people, most of whom in many instances are as really pagan as any Hindu or Hottentot, and in many cases also, just as poor as any Chinaman in his paddy fields.

It must be remembered that I am not writing of settled congregational work. I am writing of our mission work pure and simple, and I have no hesitation in saying that the minister who undertakes one of these purely mission fields should be treated exactly like the foreign missionary, and get his salary paid in full from the committee.

It may be objected that this is impossible. It is not impossible in Foreign work. To extend the Home Mission work retrenchment is ordered, but the retrenchment takes the form of reducing the salaries

or grants of the Home missionaries. Not so in the Foreign work. If there is no money the men are not sent.

Now as to the need. "To every creature" is our limit, less than this is disloyalty to our King. The Foreign Committee sends, not upon faith to every heathen nation, but upon well arranged and secured supplies, to special fields. The Home Committee sends a missionary to every district in the Dominion, and if supply is short, reduces the grant. This it seems to me, backs up Mr. McQueen's argument about the relative value of "North America," and the "East, or Islands of the sea." We, of the Canada Presbyterian Church, cannot preach to "every creature." We can to a few selected fields in foreign lands. To widen the horizon in foreign work, we must increase the number at home, who, with hearts filled with the gospel, yearn to bear their share in sending the good news to the "regions beyond." God has a plan upon which this work is to be done. It is our duty to find out what that plan is. Surely, it is not "great waste of men and money" to give the gospel to those of our own household, who, perishing for lack of the bread of life, have a special claim upon our regard, who are our own kith and kin, and whose salvation must always be our paramount duty. God's plan is to your brother first, not that you may neglect the "other sheep," but that you may save a soul to be a co-worker in bringing in the other sheep also.

"S." finds fault with Mr. McQueen because he compares Home and Foreign salaries. For my part I wish men like McKay of Formosa, Wilkie of Indore, and Morton of Trinidad were better paid. They deserve all material recompense the Church can give. But Mr. McQueen's comparison is between "comfortable maintenance" and "miserable support." The missionary at home is worthy of "comfortable maintenance." He gets miserable support, and so long as good men are found, who err more grievously than Mr. McQueen can be said to do, by talking about "waste of men and money in Home fields, where several denominations are trying to keep alive a struggling cause, where there is only room for one," so long will there be friction between the great departments of the Church's work. Can "S." point out one such mission field? I do not believe he can. This problem has not hitherto been solved, nor can it be so long as men cling to their faith, and believe that their Church is the best means to carry on the work of making men moral and bringing them to Christ. I am a Presbyterian, because my faith is scriptural, and to maintain my Church and spread it are to me the surest way to save the world. Others feel as I do, else why are we not united with other denominations?

In the present state of the Union question it is worse than idle to ask our people to unite with the Methodists, Episcopalians or Baptists. Besides, as we believe in our Church, and in the future of Canada, we do not propose to efface ourselves to save a few dollars. That was done in Ontario long ago with dire results. Presbyterian grace is a fine foundation for a new country. The people built upon it fall away less than do the people of other denominations. Presbyterian backbone makes men more straight and upright than any other kind of backbone. You are unable to twist and contort it. It stands firm always. On this account we mean to fight for Home missions in every part of the Dominion under the care of our beloved Zion. Look up the Blue Book, you will find many of our Home missions down for handsome sums for Foreign missions, and the amount sent to Dr. Cochran very small indeed. Dear brother "S." let us unite in making God's work one. In our Church it is two at present. While this remains don't be angry at a frontier man, who knows all the trials by experience, growling now and again. A growl regulates like a governor and the overstrung worker, works all the harder for letting off steam. We all say in private what McQueen has said in public, and we love the man for doing it.

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