

STUDENTS FOR THE SACRED MINISTRY— WHENCE DO THEY COME ?

I.

THE writer once met a godly mother, whose high ambition it was to have all her sons ministers, and all her daughters ministers' wives. She and her good husband had reared them on a farm in Ontario, schooled them there, and then moved to an educational centre, in which was a Presbyterian theological college, where her sons were prepared for the ministry, and her daughters thrown more or less in the society of theological students. All her sons, it is believed, became ministers; whether her daughters became ministers' wives is not known to the writer, whose acquaintance with the family was not long. The incident is, however, striking and instructive, as revealing the fact that the spirit of the holy women of old, of Hannah and Elizabeth, still lives on in the Church of Christ. And we may, I think, safely predict that so long as a church can point to such shining examples of devotion as this, she will never lack a class of godly zealous men, to replenish the ranks of the ministry.

This may serve to introduce the topic of this paper. These candidates for the sacred ministry were reared in a country home. And it suggests the question: What proportion of students for the ministry is from country homes, and what from homes in the city? How does the matter stand? Antecedently, one would suppose that the ranks of students in our theological halls are filled chiefly from city homes, and for the following, among other reasons:—

First.—The educational advantages of cities and towns are superior to those of the country. This is especially true of university towns, such as Halifax, Montreal, Kingston and Toronto. To young men living in such centres, there is every appliance for mental training and equipment for all the learned professions, at their very doors.

Secondly.—Religious privileges are greater in cities than in the country. The greater compactness of congregations renders it quite possible to hold religious services more frequently and regularly. There is also a greater variety of Christian work, and there are more