

SYMPOSIUM.

IS THE TRAINING FOR THE MINISTRY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA SUFFICIENTLY PRACTICAL?

This opening article of Dr. Armstrong is, as was requested, on the training in the theological halls. After we had asked him to write we determined to broaden the subject to that which is given above. On page 62 of our last issue we made a statement concerning this symposium; we would draw attention to what was said there.—Editor.

You have asked me to give you a short paper as the opening to a discussion of the question—"Is the training in our theological halls sufficiently practical?" An elaborate article will not be expected. I have therefore thrown together the following thoughts with the hope that they will serve to introduce a "symposium" on this subject that will be very practical indeed.

There is no one who questions the ability, piety and zeal with which the great duty of training preachers is discharged by those to whom our Church has committed it. But even they will not be above taking a hint kindly given.

We hold that the training in our halls can be made more practical and efficient.

1. In the teaching of systematic theology it would be a practical gain if more liberty were given to students in discussing the various themes brought under their notice. By this I do not mean the ordinary liberty of asking questions and of submitting an occasional point. What I mean is this: Let the theme be introduced by the teacher or by a student, and let there be a free conference on this theme in the class room, such conference to be continued as long as it is suggestive and inspiring. The Professor can then sum up the discussion, make corrections where needed, and guide his students to sources of information in the library. In this way

the student's mind is kept alert whereas it is comparatively passive in cramming up a text-book or taking down notes from dictation to be learned off for the examination at the end of the term.

2. Unless great changes have taken place in the methods of exegetical teaching in recent years, there is room for practical improvement. A few passages thoroughly explored in the originals is most excellent training, and it is also of great practical value. But what we desiderate, in addition, is this—a thoroughgoing drill in the whole Bible (English translation or other), with this one object in view, to make the student a skilful preacher of the Word. To say to the student, "There is your Book—your instrument; we will train you in its use, that you may handle it effectively." There has been too much of the purely academic spirit and too little attention to the popular need in this department.

3. I take another department;—Church History and Historic Theology. The Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican are very careful to have their students trained in these from their own point of view. Should not we who do not believe in the historical interpretations of these churches give special attention to this subject from our own standpoint? In the light of present discussion it is clearly our duty to do so. Further, would it not be a practical thing to have a somewhat full course on the history of our own branch of the Church,—the history and principles of Presbyterianism. I do not mean by this an occasional lecture, but a complete study of the subject.

4. I believe too little attention is given in the college course to the modern, present, pressing discussions on theological and kindred questions. Is it not the