

majority of students received before entering on the study of theology, and to give practice in composition and public speaking. This was the great need of the times, and in supplying it the Society served a good purpose. But all this is now changed. The demand for men is not so urgent. The need for a thorough preparatory training is becoming more and more evident. A full university course is now the rule, and must continue to be a rule admitting of but few exceptions. A theological hall presupposes a university, and the work of Knox College is coming to be recognised more and more as the study of theological science, not the study of all science. And it is because the Literary and Metaphysical Society is adapted to a state of things foreign to the present-day students, and affords them but little assistance in their prosecution of the study of theology, the main work which at present concerns them, that so many can systematically and conscientiously absent themselves from its ordinary meetings and manifest but the most languid interest in its affairs.

The contention is that this Society should subserve the interests of the actual students of theology. I hold that, as a rule, all matriculated and non-matriculated students at the university, though resident in Knox College, should be active and sympathetic members of the university society. This much they owe to their university; and the training there received will, on the testimony of experience, be of immense value to them. It follows, then, that Knox College Society, being first and mainly for theological students, should be first and mainly theological. Theological discussions should not be, as at present, discountenanced or prohibited. Indeed the great aim of such a society in a theological college should be to stimulate original research, and the free and independent discussion of the great problems of theology which are brought under the notice of a student in his college course, and upon which he is expected to express an honest and intelligent opinion before ordination. Such discussions are, in fact, the only ones really pertinent to serious theological study; at least they are much more pertinent than debates over the hoary old brain-twisters that have done yeoman service times out of mind during the history of the Society.

I have long felt, with many others, this insufficiency of the Society, as now constituted, to meet the wants of our theological students; but it was recently that I began to feel free to propose reconstruction, or prepared to offer a suggestion. What I have seen and learned during my present tour of the Scottish colleges has not only deepened my conviction of the inadequacy of our own Society but also suggested the remedy. In each of the four universities here there are the distinctively