

"It is impossible to reach truth under the systems and methods of theological colleges."

I would multiply extracts simply for the purpose of letting them carry (as I think they do) their own refutation on their face, but I wish to reserve some space for myself.

I have had more or less intimate knowledge of the men who conduct the various theological schools. I have heard them speak on subjects which would give a fair indication of their breadth of culture and large-mindedness. I have listened to expositions of the course of study in their institutions. I have had the pleasure of knowing many of the men educated at these institutions, and I have rejoiced to know that they have reached a high standard of literary and intellectual excellence as the result of their training in the theological colleges which they had attended. Many of them are prominent in the benevolent and social movements of the day, which their large-heartedness and quickened intellects have prompted them to engage in. By these several tests of intellectual development and enlightened Christian sympathy I have formed my judgment. For the test, "by their fruits ye shall know them," can be applied to them, as well as to the individual, daily, Christian life. My experience and my convictions are, therefore, entirely at variance with those of Mr. Stevenson.

I may say, too, that whoever will read with thoughtful candor the valuable address of Rev. Dr. Sheraton at the recent re-opening of Wycliffe College, must come to the conclusion that Mr. Stevenson's sweeping censure of the teaching in that college, amongst others, is extremely unjust. I quote one or two passages from Dr. Sheraton's address. He said: "The culture of the Christian minister should be the broadest, richest, and most complete that God's Providence gives him opportunity to acquire. Gifts differ. Opportunities differ. But with all allowance for this, we want to press upon our students the keeping before them the highest possible ideal. . . . Then he who would minister to man must study man. The phenomena of mind, the history and principles of philosophy, the methods of reasoning, will engage the earnest study of the theologian. . . . The material universe is a continuous manifestation of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. From it the theologian derives many effective demonstrations rather corroborative of his fundamental theses, and the preacher draws his aptest illustrations of spiritual truths. But there is another and more imperative reason why the claims of physical science should be impressed upon theological students. This is characteristically a scientific age; its spirit, its tendencies and its methods are all scientific. It will take nothing for granted. It will leave nothing unexplored. Doubtless we find exaggerations and perversions. . . . Nevertheless the spirit of science is a truth-loving and truth-seeking spirit. As such it is of God. It behooves every theologian to understand it, and he ought to be in sympathy with it. In fact, he would be the better to learn the lessons it teaches of accuracy, thoroughness, independence of thought and fearlessness in the pursuit of truth. . . . Most emphatically would I re-echo the desire of Charles Kingsley that the day may come 'when it will be considered necessary that every candidate for ordination should be required to have passed creditably in at least one branch of physical science, if it be only to teach him the method of sound scientific thought.'"

There is no mistaking the character of such training as these extracts illustrate and enforce. They have a true and genuine ring about them, and savour of nothing which could "contract and narrow men," as stated in the VARSITY extract.

Again, I had the pleasure of hearing a carefully prepared and interesting address on the history of the advance in theological science and knowledge by the Rev. Dr. Body, at Trinity College, last Saturday. He mentioned the various contributions to theological literature that have been lately made by eminent English and German divines as the product of the ripest scholarship and most patient research—especially those of Bishop Lightfoot.

And, from the facts which he adduced, he showed conclusively that during the last decade theological science has made as decided an advance as has physical science.

Besides, we know well that the extraordinary activity, and even restlessness, in the theological and religious world of to-day is largely the result of the broader and more liberal system of theological training which is pursued everywhere now. It indicates a wonderful advance on the old-time system. What Mr. Stevenson says may have been characteristic of the theological training of many years ago, but it certainly is by no means that of to-day.

In these remarks I desire to confine myself chiefly to the theological training in the schools of my own church. Its very liberality and extent of theological area has been often a subject of reproach by those outside of her pale, but by her sons it is regarded as one of her chief excellences, as it gives a wider range to her theological studies and scholarship.

The very establishment of two recognized Church of England theological colleges in Toronto is an evidence of the extensive area occupied by the various schools of thought which exist in that Church. It not only demonstrates a wide divergence in that religious thought, but it also shows what a wide space is allowable between the two "schools of thought" represented by Trinity and Wycliffe. I need only mention the names of Liddon and Ryle, Knox-Little and Payne Smith, Temple and Tait, Farrar and Fraser, Benson and Bickersteth, Lightfoot and Harold-Brown, Arnold and Alford, Stanley and Ellicott, to show that a theological training which has produced men so eminent and so widely differing from each other in theological views cannot be justly characterized as either "narrow" or "full of error."

It was to maintain the undeniable and historical right of one of the "schools of thought" in the Church of England in this Province to a college (such as Wycliffe) that its friends battled for years in the Diocesan Synod; and it was to assert the prerogative of the Church in that respect that Trinity College was founded by Bishop Strachan. The relations of both may, and should, be of the most friendly character, for each has its own appropriate work to do, which neither can do so well for the other. Even together they can scarcely supply the demand for well trained and devoted ministers. It may still be said, with renewed emphasis—the fields are white unto the harvest, but as yet the labourers are few.

Believe me, very sincerely yours,

Toronto, Feb., 1886.

J. GEORGE HODGINS.

#### *To the Editor of the VARSITY:*

SIR,—In the issue of the VARSITY for January 30th there appears an article on "The New Protestantism." The position taken in the article is, briefly, that in our day men have revolted against the bondage too long imposed on them by ecclesiastical corporations, in regard to the matter of their beliefs. Men now sit in judgment on the creeds of their ancestors, rejecting what is false while they hold fast what is true. Thus progress is being made in truth and in the better living to which truth received and acted upon gives rise. But this march of truth is opposed and hindered by the inertia of one class—the clerical body. The position of the clergy is mainly the result of their faulty education. They are not educated, but instructed, and this instruction is not in truth absolute, but in truth relative to certain isms and ologies. It is impossible for theological students to reach absolute truth, because in regard to the received doctrines the case is prejudged. Students for admission virtually affirm a belief already formed concerning the very things they should come to investigate. They agree to believe what they are told to believe.

We have in this article a curious mixture of commonplaceness and falsity. That the age is a critical one, none will deny. It is true that the men of to-day claim the right to reach their own conclusions as to what should be held fast and what rejected. But it is not true that the clergy and theological students of the Protestant