

Contributions.

A WORD TO THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS.

BY ONE OF THEM.

In submitting some suggestions to my fellow theological students, the only excuse I can offer is that the few jottings I shall make are from the note-book of my own experience during several years of college life. As I shall not attempt to say anything new, let no one be surprised if he find that the substance of this article is already known to him. It is possible, however, that some have never looked in the direction in which these notes point, and of them I respectfully ask a hearing.

When a student withdraws from ordinary life to spend several years in continual study, he enters a world of its own—the world of books, one which is removed from the larger outside world of labor, business and society. And because he is more or less isolated from its influences, he is in danger of getting out of sympathy with the larger outside world. The theological student is more liable to this tendency than the ordinary student, for the reason that he is the more completely isolated, for while the latter lives in private houses throughout the city, the former eats and sleeps within the walls of a college building. Now I know that there are very great advantages in having a college residence, and we theological students are to be envied because we in Montreal are so well situated in that respect. Especially are those who have experienced the old life of residence in private houses throughout the city, who have come into the city in miserable uncertainty as to where we were going to spend the winter, who have hunted up "Rooms to Let" in the daily papers and have gone from house to house for hours, at last to settle down in what at best was a makeshift for a home, and at worst such a place as to make us long for spring and our mother's house. These are the better able to appreciate the luxury of being settled in comfortable rooms, among congenial companions, waiting for the dinner-bell, in an hour after arriving at Bonaventure. Your humble servant, the writer, has experienced both these ways of life, and by much prefers the latter. At the same time, residence in boarding houses has to us its advantages. A minister must, above all men, have a wide knowledge of human experience; and there is more human experience outside a college than within. Just as now the world is full of complaining landladies, and negligent servants and noisy children, so will it be when we are ministers ten or twenty years hence. Besides in a college residence many of the questions of common life do not obtrude themselves disagreeably before our face. In college we have sufficient good fare, comfortable rooms; we are usually in good health and happy; although few of us are rich and most are poor, yet none suffer want. But, on the contrary, the life of many a man is worried with disagreeable questions. What to eat and what to wear, is often a subject of debate; how to make both ends meet is the hardest problem to be solved; the account-book is more unattractive than a distasteful text-book; rent day more

dreaded than an examination, and louder than the noise of college songs rises continually. the moaning cry of labor and misfortune and pain from weary struggling humanity. He is a wise man who in his comfortable seclusion remembers these things and keeps himself in sympathy with the men and women who experience them.

Again, even our studies may be a source of weakness. While most men live in a world of action, we live in a world of thought. Although it is true that thought directs action and that our studies are intended to aid us in future work, yet we are in danger of getting out of sympathy with the world of action, for the reason that our studies—both literary and theological—bear so indirectly upon actual life.

Just for example, take the study of Apologetics. It is true that at the present day when the Bible and Christianity are being tried in the crucible of scientific inquiry, we must know what are the enemies of and how to defend from them our precious faith. Yet let us remember that the average man cares little for the opinions of the critics of the Tubingen school, or the attitude of Huxley towards Christianity. He is beset by temptation; day and night, at home, on the street, at his work, he feels a power pulling him down, and he reaches out for a power that will keep him from falling and lift him up to a nobler life.

There are some subjects which have a special tendency to carry us away from actual life, such as historical theology. We trace the influence of Neo-Platonism on Christian doctrine, or attempt to elaborate Origen's doctrine of the Trinity, and we do well, for these were dealing with eternal verities; yet we must take excursions only into the distant centuries, we must not live there. Our world is the world of today. We are to help living men to meet real foes and solve present problems.

Passing on to other matters, I have noticed that when some enter a theological college they associate only with theological students. If only for our own sake we should associate with other students—and for several reasons this is desirable. In the future we shall have in our congregation lawyers, doctors, mechanics, editors. These are now students. If by associating with them we get some idea of their sentiments and manner of thinking, and get to know their point of view in looking at things, we shall be the better able to present our belief in a way that will commend itself to them. If, on the other hand, we are not *en rapport* with them now, there is little hope of getting *en rapport* with them in the future. Besides, all of us have objectionable corners which ought to be rubbed off. Some public men are examples to us in this respect; they can meet all kinds of men gracefully, and keep their peculiarities rounded off by intercourse with other men. As intercourse with our own students will not take off all our corners, we need to put ourselves where we can rub up against men of other classes.

Just here may I be pardoned if I whisper in your ear what I remind myself of, that we are prone to fall into peculiar ministerial habits—a peculiar carriage of