

some members have, and the respect which others have for the issues of election night. Interest in the real work of the Society is never very great, and when at the end of the session members count up the gains and losses the majorities are not large. Indeed members have seriously questioned, sometimes in the Society itself, more frequently outside it, whether the institution has not become effete, and unable to show good reason for further existence as the first society in a great theological college.

Now such expressions do not reflect, nor did any one ever regard them as reflecting, on the efficiency of any of the committees which from year to year have directed the affairs of the Society. Although never a member of the General Committee, I am familiar with the work done, and am free to say that since 1878, when I first knew the Society, that committee has been as faithful, as efficient and as successful as any committee of the society, under the circumstances, could be. The cause of this confessed failure—I speak of matters as they were when I was an active member of the Society—the cause of this confessed failure lay deeper than the inefficiency of any committee. Did it not, succeeding committees would have corrected the mistakes of their predecessors. The secret of the failure is not in the administration of the Society, but, as it seems to me at this distance, in its nature and constitution. The Society is an institution of the past which is not adapted to present needs and present circumstances. Before it can claim the attention and support of devoted students of theology it must be reconceived, reconstructed.

This is the fate which, on reflection, one would expect. The Society is not now much different from what it was when first organized. It is still the "Literary and Metaphysical Society." But circumstances are different. The needs of the members are different. The work of the college is in a sense different. And it is because the constitution and aims of the Society have not changed with the changed conditions that the question of its reconstruction is now urgent.

The Society was organized, many years ago, after the pattern of University College Literary and Scientific Society, in which many of its first members were trained, and from the constitution of which several articles were adapted. That it should be literary and metaphysical was determined by the needs of the times. The exigencies of the Church's work necessitated the admission into the theological classes of many, whose preparatory training was defective. A full university course was the exception; for had it been otherwise our great Home Mission work would never have been overtaken. This Society was intended to supplement the partial literary and metaphysical training which the