

The Canadian Independent.

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TORONTO, NOV. 4, 1880.

IN consequence of the holiday we have to go to press a day earlier. Correspondents, whose communications do not appear, will take this as the explanation.

AN EDUCATED MINISTRY.

The address of Dr Newth, chairman of the "Congregational Union of England and Wales," at the autumnal meeting, in Birmingham, dealt with the relations mutually sustained by the churches and colleges of the denomination, and handled the subject in such a thorough and exhaustive manner that we would fain transfer the whole of his address to our columns. That, however, is impossible, as it would completely fill one of our numbers, and so we must content ourselves with briefly indicating the leading points of this most important and masterly address.

He starts with the truth, that a duty rests upon the church to provide trained pastors for the work, that, as in the natural life, men should beware of anything that weakens the body, so in its spiritual corporate life they should strive for its highest and most perfect development. He says:

"And though we may not say that under all circumstances pastors specially trained for their work are essential to the being of a church, we may say that they are essential to its well-being—that, as experience shows, without them, in the ordinary circumstances of human history, the life of a church cannot be maintained in vigorous exercise, and is altogether incompetent to discharge some of the most important functions. Pastors and teachers are declared to be amongst the gifts of God to His Church 'for the perfecting of the saints,' and 'unto the building up of the body of Christ.' In our corporate capacity, then, as well as in our personal, the obligation rests upon us to provide for a succession of faithful men who shall be able to teach others also."

He then enters upon a history of the the Congregational Colleges in England, which, being of minor importance to us, we pass over. The necessity of changes from time to time in the training of students is very clearly shewn:

"It is obvious, even to the most superficial observer, that, as changes arise in the social and intellectual conditions under which the work of the churches is to be carried on, so also must there be corresponding changes in the preparations we make for the fulfilment of our work. And while it is undeniably true that those qualifications for the Christian ministry which rank first in order are the same essentially, under all circumstances, in all times, not less, but still more, is it true that the secondary qualifications, those superadded gifts which are at once the result and the reward of human effort, must, inasmuch as they are the means and the channels through which our spiritual energies operate upon the hearts and minds of others—and for this very reason—vary as they vary upon whom they are to be exercised. Just as in the husbandry of earth the wise farmer will adapt his im-

plements to the present condition of the soil, so in this our spiritual husbandry must our implements—our speech, thought, and emotion—be such as are adapted to the present circumstances of men. Changes, therefore, in the character and extent of our curriculum of preparatory study are a recurring necessity."

And this change he says has been made in the English colleges—they have kept pace with the changing circumstances.

"Such changes, may I be permitted to remind you, have from time to time been made in the past. In times when, as in the latter part of the last century, the means of education were accessible to comparatively few, and there was little to stimulate thought amongst the people at large, a moderate amount of preparatory culture sufficed for the needs of the day. But when other days arrived, and through the quickened intelligence of the nation, religious inquiries occupied a larger place in the attention of men, and, in consequence, a wider field was opened for the labour of the Christian teacher, demanding more extensive knowledge and a larger skill, than did our fathers, larger preparation was needed."

He then goes on to allude to the fact that other denominations have felt the need of a change and have striven to make it:

"Changes have been going on in various directions around us. Others have wakened up to a truer estimate of the work of the Christian pastor, have recognised the variety and extent of the demands now made upon him, and have diligently striven to prepare themselves to meet these demands. A wise and efficient training for the work of the ministry is now a more general thing than it once was. As a result of this, thoughtful men amongst us are hence impressed with the conviction that the time has come in which it behoves us to contemplate further movements of advance, and earnestly to deliberate as to the mode in which those movements may best be made."

The cry for "College Reform" is then considered and we would that our readers would study it:

"It is, in my judgment, a matter of regret that this conviction should in any quarter, have sought expression in the cry 'College Reform.' It is to be regretted, on the threefold ground that it suggests an unjust and unfounded charge, that it inflicts a present injury upon important interests and that it creates a risk of putting the question upon a false issue. It suggests to many that our colleges, like corrupt municipalities or rotten boroughs, are effete institutions, whose managers, content with old-fashioned ways, are offering a dogged resistance to change, whose professors are given up to self-indulgent ease, and whose principals are the lazy holders of comfortable sinecures. How false this is I need not say. But it may be needful for the information of some that I should emphasize the fact that all the successive improvements made in our college plans during the past forty years have been made at the instance of the professors and committees of the colleges, and that, in no single case has, the suggestion of the measure come from a source outside themselves. Still more unjust is it to imply that your professors are either indifferent or obstructive. It is they who have the deepest sense of the imperfections of the present, and the keenest apprehension of the demands and possibilities of the future. The colleges and the churches sustain the closest reciprocal relations, and those relations, must be distinctly recognised in order that the resulting duties may be rightly fulfilled. The welfare of the churches is largely dependent upon the adaptedness of the ministry to their wants, upon its sympathy with their aspirations, its knowledge of

their perils, and its ability to direct their movements. And that these qualities may be secured to the fullest extent, the colleges should be in the closest possible association with the best life of the churches—and should be the first to share in the influence of any out-pouring of the Holy Spirit."

He then appeals for more liberal aid to the colleges, placing before the churches very clearly their duty to sustain effectually their work.

He then proceeds to emphasize the fact that the position of science to-day demands far more extensive culture than formerly. Sciences of which, less than half a century ago, a man might in his leisure hours master with comparative ease all that was then known, now demand the labor of a lifetime. Not only so, but the science of theology has shared in the general advance, it stands no longer above, but other sciences touch and dispute with it the right to the attention and obedience of man. This fact calls for more distinctive and special teaching. Professors must not be expected to spread their efforts over the whole field. Concentration is required if anything worthy of the age is to be obtained. Nor even in theology is the old style of teaching possible if the best results are to be obtained.

"The simple enumeration of the various branches of theological study, systematic theology, apologetic theology, ecclesiastical history, Biblical criticism, Old Testament exegesis, New Testament exegesis, homiletics, and pastoral theology, is sufficient to demonstrate the sheer impossibility that any one man, or any two men could in the present day claim to be masters of all, or could efficiently teach them in the style which is needed if our future ministers are to be equal to the demands of their work."

The increase of knowledge amongst the hearers also demands higher culture on the part of him who shall address them.

"Our pastors have to deal with hearers of intellectual aptitude and of advancing culture, with hearers amongst whom there has grown up, and is rapidly extending, a spirit of eager curiosity about Biblical questions. It should therefore be your ambition to provide for them the highest style of instruction which it is possible to obtain."

He follows with a discussion of the duty of the churches in the case. First it is important that the young men who are sent may be "better prepared to reap the full advantage of the training which is there provided." The professors in the Colleges in England or Canada cannot make ministerial bricks (no slang is intended) without preparatory straw—there must be ability, an adaptation to the work, and the foundation of a good education;—given these, and the Professors may have hope in their work, but if any or all of these are wanting—and, strange as it may appear, all are wanting sometimes—the tutor's task is like pouring water into a bottomless cask. Nor is the duty presented to those who are the most fitted for it.

"There is no united expression of an anxious desire that strong and brave and gifted men may be raised up for the work of God. There are no earnest supplications for such a blessing offered to the Giver of all Good. There is no eager putting of the question, Who is there amongst us who should be set apart for this work, whom we should encourage and help to it; nay, upon whom we should lay it, with the authority of our

Christian affection and united judgment as a burthen of the Lord. What are we, and what is our church life, if there be so little of self-surrender to the will of our Lord, so little of the spirit of sacrifice in our lives, that we cannot, for very shame, ask from another that he should give up his prospects of worldly wealth or position for the sake of Christ, and cannot dare to repeat to him the message, 'The Master has need of thee,' or to urge upon him the personal application of the argument, 'Ye are not your own; ye were bought with a price, therefore glorify God?'

Not only should there be educated fitness, there should be spiritual fitness also in the men who are to be the future leaders in our church life.

"But, still more, such active co-operation of the churches as I am asking for will be effective in inducing a higher state of religious preparedness in our candidates. A true ministerial training involves far more than the culture of the intellectual powers. It calls, in addition, for a *spiritual* culture, the discipline and training of the spiritual faculties, and for a *practical* culture, the studies and exercises which give skill in the use of the varied means whereby we directly influence the mind and heart of others. I urge to-day that you render your aid as churches at a yet earlier period of the student's history, and that, by the opportunities you afford for the exercise of his gifts, by your kindly oversight and guidance, and by the larger estimate you incite him to form of the skill demanded in one who has the care of souls, you send him up to the college better prepared to pursue with all diligence this department of his training."

Yet further, there is needed in these men constant and diligent spiritual culture.

Finally, he put vividly before his audience how much of blessing and progress depended upon the men who were to be the ministers of the future.

"The work of the ministry calls for piety of a special type. As it is not babes in Christ who are called to this work, but the young men who are strong; so, also, it is not all of those, but they who with their strength combine a holy fervour of consecration, a healthy sensitiveness of conscience, a quick and tender sympathy, a firm steadfastness of faith, and a robust cheerfulness of hope—in a word, such a degree and kind of spiritual energy that they can bravely, reverently, and with a clear apprehension of what is involved in it, take up the heavy obligation to be 'an example to them that believe in word, in manner of life, in love, and in purity. It is in view of this that I appeal most earnestly of all for the co-operation of the churches. It is upon the formative influences that you exert upon him that the religious character of the ministerial candidate is largely dependent."

We have far exceeded the limits of an ordinary article, but the importance of the subject treated by Dr. Newth must be our apology. We have had difficulty, not in making selections from the address, but in deciding what to exclude. The great bulk of the matter is not only excellent in itself, but pertinent to us, and might, *mutatis mutandis*, have been spoken at our own Congregational Union. Here, to sum up, are the essential points:—The age demands an educated ministry. Any church that would maintain its ground must have it. What did fifty years ago will not do to-day. So there must be, first of all, a large and liberal heart to college work. One man must not be expected to do the work of two or three, but