

THE
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THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION.

II.

“HERE AM I, SEND ME.”

In an article in our last number the scarcity of Theological students was shown to be a matter demanding the serious and prayerful consideration of the church. The fact was stated that, looking at the work to be done, comparatively few young men were coming forward to be labourers in the vineyard; the grand cause of this dearth of workmen was indicated; means were suggested for the removal of the evil; and an earnest appeal was made to the pious youth of the church to come to the help of the Lord.

To the young men who express their readiness to enter upon a course of study preparatory to the work of the ministry the Church owes a duty, which, while not altogether, has to a great extent been overlooked in the past; and it is the design of the present article to expound that duty and press it upon the attention, so that not only may those who are saying, “Here am I, send me,” be furnished with whatever is necessary for the successful prosecution of their studies, but that others, in beholding the ruggedness of the path somewhat smoothed, may be induced to choose the ministry as their life’s work.

The Presbyterian Church has always striven to possess a well-trained ministry, and that branch of it with which we are connected has ever been careful, even in the day of small things, to have workmen not

needing to be ashamed. A curriculum of study extending over about seven years—four in college and three in the Hall—is what, except in very rare cases, is required of the candidate for the ministry. And may the day be far distant when the standard of qualification is lowered, for the times imperatively demand that the ministry be filled with men not only of gracious hearts but of well trained minds—men who are able to present the truth clearly and attractively and to cope with error in any of the protean shapes it may assume. Few of the young men who enter the ministry of our church pass through this long curriculum without a severe struggle; and the duty to which we have adverted is that of furnishing such aid as will ease the struggle.

Nearly all our students are drafted from families in humble circumstances, and the consequence is that almost from the very outset they have to depend upon their own resources. Take the following as a typical case. A young lad, with it may be a future not very clearly defined, hardly knowing his own mind, yet with a desire to be a minister of the gospel, endeavours to obtain a liberal education. Having passed through the highest department of the common school he obtains a certificate to teach. After teaching for a year or two he attends an academy, where he commences the study of the classics. When his means are expended he resumes teaching, and after an interval of six months or a year he returns to the academy. Having become acquainted with the rudiments of