

Correspondence.

At no period in our history has there been more interest taken in religious matters than is taken at present. Our churches never were better attended, week night meetings were never more closely packed. Let a prayer meeting be called in a school house and it is sure to be crowded, if only it is held at night when the day's work is over.

Imagine a stranger from a far country ignorant of Christian usage visiting one of our congregations and witnessing this keen interest in religion. He would naturally have many questions to ask. He might enquire for example why the elder who conducted the prayer meeting did not also preach from the pulpit on the Sabbath. He would be told in reply that special gifts and special training were required for the work of the pulpit, that although the Gospel plainly sets before the simplest mind the way of salvation yet as the Scriptures were originally written in Ancient tongues, were full of allusions to ancient customs and usages, many of which are now obsolete; as much of the New Testament was written in answer to prevailing heresies and false notions in theology and morals, is largely argumentative in parts, is full of orientalisms and metaphorical expressions, learned research and laborious study are required in order fully to elucidate such matters:—that moreover every age has to recast the form in which it expresses its religious belief, to translate into the language of to-day the unalterable truths held in former times and expressed in the idiom and speech peculiar to those ages; further as it is the duty of each one to study the sacred records for himself an instructor and guide is required who will speak with all the calmness of knowledge and

ripe thought and point out the errors and hasty conclusions arising from the rashness and intolerance of ignorance; and lastly as the duties of religion are practical the relation between doctrine and daily life and its ever varying duties must be pointed out and urged upon men with all the energy and wisdom possible, for these and other reasons he would be told the church sets apart a class of men whose duty it is to make these things a special study. Accordingly after seven or eight years special and laborious training under the most learned and competent teachers the world can produce, with the advantage of large libraries, instructed in the history of the church since its foundation, in the history and changes of doctrine, of heresies, of creeds, in short of the vast field of theological research, these men are trained to tell us in the clearest and most convincing manner with all the persuasiveness at their command our duties to God and to our fellow man, that it may be well with us here and hereafter. On every sabbath such a teacher is expected to deliver two or three carefully prepared discourses, adapted to every class of hearer, to young and old, learned and ignorant, thoughtful and thoughtless—delivered so as to please everybody and above all hurt no ones feelings; he is expected to address one or more prayer meetings weekly, to visit as often as possible the families of his congregation numbering often from one to two hundred, to know all about their affairs, to counsel and exhort them as to temporal as well as spiritual duties, to catechise the children, attend Bible classes visit the sick (and know when they are sick, whether told of it or not), to visit and examine the public schools, to settle the quarrels of ill tempered neighbors, attend Presbyteries, work on committees, to entertain all comers liberally, to visit, and encourage Y. M. C. Associations, Sabbath schools, be ready to lecture to