

## THE PREPARATORY COURSE.

(SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE.)

*Editor Presbyterian Review.*

SIR,—The beginning of a new session of Knox College under its strengthened Theological Faculty, has led many of the friends of the institution to consider whether some improvement might not be made in the literary culture of the students, before they enter on the special work of the Seminary. It is felt that, while the raising of the standard in theology is a step in the right direction, and is gratifying to all interested in the welfare of the College, yet the benefit to be derived from the more complete equipment of the Theological Faculty, and the efforts of the Professors to impart a more thorough training in the various departments of ministerial education, will be greatly minimized and hampered by the continued importation into the theological classes of men without sufficient previous literary training and culture. While the Canadian Church was in its infancy, and the means provided for obtaining an adequate literary education were wanting, or surrounded by ecclesiastical or financial restrictions which almost precluded students from obtaining the higher education of the period, and while more men were urgently required for Home Mission work than could be found, the Church was obliged to accept the services of such students as presented themselves, and to provide for them such educational advantages through the preparatory course, as circumstances then permitted. This condition of affairs is entirely changed. Higher education is now within the reach of all, and can be obtained in our University at a cost almost nominal; and while in the past, ministers could not be found in sufficient numbers to supply the needs of the Church, now men are more numerous than charges.

Under these circumstances, it becomes a grave question whether the Church is called on any longer to furnish at a large expense, a gratuitous literary education to aspirants for the ministry, and to divert money given for theological education, to foster and perpetuate a system which affords a primary education confessedly inadequate. The maintenance of the preparatory course, in fact, holds out a premium to superficiality, and opens a side door for entrance into a profession which requires in these times imperatively, the highest culture. The policy of the Church in this respect, is in painful contrast to that of the governing bodies of the legal and medical professions, and indeed of all educational institutions, and so much is this noticed, that prominent laymen have declined to subscribe to the funds of the College while the Preparatory Course is continued. It is not surprising that, under the present system of clerical education, so many complaints are heard of the inadequacy of ministerial support. Congregations are not slow to realize, that if the education of a minister is indifferent, and has cost him little or nothing, he cannot expect a liberal remuneration for his services. In the Church of England of late years, an increasing number of candidates for the ministry have obtained ordination without having previously had a University education. These men are known in England as "Literates," and the large increase of such, has naturally reduced the already meagre rate of ministerial remuneration. The Presbyterian Church in England, being fully alive to the defects of the past system, has been using every effort to raise the standard of the culture of students, and with a view to improvement has removed its Divinity Hall to Cambridge.

It has been said in answer to suggestions previously made as to the abolition of the Preparatory Course, that if students were required to take a University Degree, it would extend the time required to be spent by them in study. This doubtless is the case but it would only enlarge the period for one year longer than at present. If a student looks to the ministry for a living, this is unquestionably a weighty argument with him, but if a young man has the high ideal before him, but if a young man has the high ideal before him, his life work will out weigh all such unworthy considerations. It has also been argued that if a University Degree were demanded before students entered the theological classes at Knox College, many would seek their education in other institutions. The loss would

not only not be serious, but would be eminently advantageous to the College and the Church. The Church would be benefitted by receiving a larger number of educated ministers, for it would be found that students would hesitate to deliberately seek their education at institutions where the education would be notoriously inferior to that of the students of Knox College, congregations would specially note the fact in selecting pastors. The College would itself acquire a reputation and a standing, which would attract the very best students to its halls. The College which will have the courage to insist upon the possession of a degree in Arts from every student who seeks admission to its Theological Course, will be the one which will specially command the respect and liberality of congregations.

It has been further said that were the College to insist on a University Degree being first obtained before students are received it would be a limitation on the operation of the Holy Spirit. This argument, which is somewhat questionable, appears to pre-suppose, to some extent at least, that the Spirit is more active in His energy among the "Literates" than among the University men. So far as human observation can permit of any judgment being formed on this subject it has not been borne out by experience. It must be remembered also that the Church needs educated ministers, and that the Spirit does not provide or promise the needful literary training. It is certainly true that the Spirit of God works when and where He pleases, but His gracious operations, it must be remembered are extended to multitudes who are utterly unfit for the public ministry of the Word. He certainly does not encourage superficiality in training for the ministry, or the desire on the part of students to get into the Church with the least possible quantum of education. Those who complain that the rule contemplated would preclude persons who are desirous of abandoning their business, and late in life studying for the Church, from entering the ministry might peruse with profit the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. vii. 20 where he says "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."

Hoping that this matter will receive the careful attention of your readers, I am Yours, etc.,

WM. MORTIMER CLARK.

## CHRISTIAN GIVING.

ADDRESS BEFORE THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY, BY MRS. ISABELLA BIRD, LONDON.

The laborer is worthy of his hire, and men and women cannot go forth unless they are supported on the mission fields, however simple and humble that support may be. I have not seen anything of missionary luxury, and I think that those who give may rest in peace on that subject. We all may be certain that the money which is raised in this country goes direct to the point; and that it is not used to keep missionaries in luxury, but to enable them just to live in that amount of comfort which we all know to be necessary in the climate of the East.

And we at home, many of us, are living in luxury; and if we could only reduce ourselves to the level of the missionaries and their simple way of living and their self-denial, we might be gaining more of the Master's approval than we at present have. It is hypocrisy to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest when, though we say that the silver and the gold are His, we are keeping it back from Him and are spending it on our own selfish luxuries. And I would not say upon luxuries only, but upon things which are pleasant to the eye, pleasant in various ways, not in themselves sinful, but just pleasant. And if we are spending money on them we are keeping it back from the Lord. And I think we must learn, each one of us, to ask ourselves the question—in every purchase, in every shop to which we go—"What doth God require of thee?" and "How much owest thou unto the Lord?" We owe everything, and God requires of us much.

And there are many ways—I may be forgiven, perhaps, for mentioning a few of them, in which it seems to me, on coming home, that the style of expenditure has been raised. And especially would I mention, considering the large number of women who are here, something of the extravagance in dress. The extravagance seems to me in London this year to pass all bounds, and how much Christian women are affected by it I know not. But sometimes, I