

## The Training and Work of the Ministry.

From the address of the Moderator, Dr. Laughton, at the close of the Scottish Free Church General Assembly, we clip some extracts concerning the nature and end of Theological Collegiate Education.

### THE TRAINING OF THE MINISTRY.

There is one department of the Church's work which, directly or indirectly, has occupied much of your thoughts during this Assembly—the matter, namely, of theological education—the training of students for the ministry, and the provision made in our several colleges for this purpose, a matter of vital importance to the Church, to our several separate congregations, and to every individual member of the Church.

The relation of the Church and its ministry to the learned sciences and the culture of the age is a subject at once interesting, important, and difficult. There is nothing to be more deprecated than the separation and estrangement between faith and science, between religion and culture, and there is a danger in this direction at the present day, an unwholesome tendency to jealousy and distrust on either side. Against that we have to be on our guard. A living Church should not be an illiterate Church. It must not have to dispense with learning as of no use to it. All true knowledge, secular as well as sacred, should have "holiness to the Lord" inscribed upon it, and be sacred as an offering on His altar, and it is only a living Church which can make this highest use of knowledge in all its branches.

Unlearned Christians, indeed, may be living Christians; I bless God for it. The majority of Christians are of necessity unlearned, but that does not militate against the soundness of their faith or the reasonableness of it. Many like Cowper's "Cotager,"

"Weaving at her own door,  
Pillow and bobbins all her little store;  
Just knows and knows no more her  
Bible true—

A truth the brilliant Frenchman never  
knew—

And in that chapter reads with sparkling  
eyes

Her title to a treasure in the skies."

Assuredly the faith of the Christian, whether learned or unlearned, does not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the

power of God.

But the Church must not be unlearned. It cannot content herself with an illiterate ministry, cannot turn her back on the discoveries of science or the invention of criticism, and must not attempt to ignore the objections or objections which may arise in consequence, but must be able to look at them and deal with them calmly, wisely, and reverently, through the agency of her scholars and professors; and her ministers should not be uninformed or in the dark in regard to such subjects.

It has been characteristic of the Scottish people since the Reformation that they attach importance to an educated ministry. Those whom they are to listen to every Sabbath as their instructors they expect to be better informed than themselves in various branches of knowledge, both secular and sacred. It is a reasonable demand; and if the Scottish Churches are to maintain their place and influence among the Scottish people they must be at more pains than ever to provide for a careful training and thorough instruction to those who are to occupy their pulpits. The education of the people is advancing, and the education of the ministry must advance in proportion.

There was a time, indeed not very remote, when very little was expected of the minister in many quarters. His work was counted so easy, and required so little strength either of mind or body, that the weakest of the family—the lad with least energy and capacity—was thought good enough to make a minister but I need scarcely say these were times of deadness and of Moderatism. The minister was despised because his real end and purpose was not understood. But it is otherwise now. We need the very best for the ministry of the Word; and there is nothing more encouraging at the present day than the fact that the Church has not only more students than ever, but that some of the most distinguished students in our universities are offering themselves for the ministry at home or for missionary work abroad.

While insisting on superior parts and superior education as needed in the present day it is a higher degree than ever on the part of those who enter the ministry, my brethren, I am sure, will not misunderstand me. We do not forget that something else is needed of a higher kind. A true minister of the gospel must be called of God, and taught by Him the something needed, which man cannot impart—an unction from the Holy One to touch the heart and lips with fire from