

The Educational Weekly.

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 24, 1885.

WITH too many aspirants to the pulpit there is not only a deplorable want of education, but a still more deplorable self-sufficiency which dislains education and the discipline which a course of school training imposes upon the mind as unnecessary and unbecoming the successors of the humble fishermen of Galilee. They forget that it was Paul, the scholar, more than any other apostle, who fixed the character of the evangelic ministry, making it equally effective—whether presenting the Master to the poor and oppressed, or to the rich and powerful and educated; that it was the completeness of his mental equipment no less than the many-sidedness of his character which made him more than a match for all comers, whether contending with the ecclesiasticism and religious hypocrisy of the Pharisee, or with the scepticism, the aestheticism, the philosophic dilettanteism of the Greek, or with the superstition, the haughtiness springing from a conscious superiority in material achievement, the pride of wealth and dominion, of the Roman.

It is quite true, that in every age of Christian history, there have been great religious movements in which the people have been aroused to flee from immorality and wickedness, not by the preaching of the regular clergy, but by the appeals, illogical, extravagant, and often absurd, of enthusiasts, whose phrensied teachings have set on fire the hearts of the people, with as little thought or reason, or true conception of their mission, in the minds of the zealous propagandists, as Samson's foxes had, when with fire-brands at their tails they burnt the standing corn of the Philistines. The success of the Salvation Army of to-day has been attained by methods and practices which ignore order and decorum, and by men and women whose scholarship and sense of logic are *nil*; yet that this success signifies a great movement towards righteousness none will gainsay. But religion, like culture, works *downward*. If what may be called the lower classes are to be pure in heart, and Christian in faith, so must be the few whose lives are given to culture, and so, too, the great body of the people whose minds are not especially intent upon culture, but rather upon making some substantial gain in the world, but who are, nevertheless, intelligent, sharp-seeing, capable of testing the truth of a doctrine by mental intuition, as it were. It is with this cultured few, and with this great body of the people, keen, logical, unemotional, amenable only to good sense and reason, that the preacher

attached to any of our large religious organizations, has mainly to deal; and if he be devoid of training, if he be of illogical habit of mind, if he fail to discern the spirit of the times, and be blind to the intellectual forces, now rife, which tend to sway his people away from his influence, then soon shall "his altars be left unto him desolate," and religion and Christianity suffer through his insufficiency.

All teachers in our more advanced schools must often have been pained, as we have been, to see a mind that could not bring itself to comprehend the meaning of a proposition in Euclid, or to frame a simple argument on any common theme in language free from barbarism, proposing to itself to become the guide, in those weighty matters which concern the soul, of all who might fall under its influence during a lifetime's service in the ministry. The value and trustworthiness of a "call" to the ministry are things so delicate and sacred that no secular teacher cares openly to estimate them, however much his secret opinion thereupon may differ from that of the novice who deems himself to have received one. But certainly one of the severest trials to which any instructor's patience can be put, is to be forced to listen day after day to unsatisfactory recitations, and to endure continued remissness in preparation and study on the part of young men who, with the ministry in view, will not patiently wait till they are mentally fitted to enter it, but must needs take upon themselves to discharge ministerial functions, to the neglect of their own immediate duties, and the hurt of their mental training.

The action of the faculty of Woodstock College in memorialising the Board of Trustees and other authorities of the Baptist Church for a higher (minimum) standard of scholastic qualification for candidates for the ministry, and its probable endorsement by the Church at large, are matters of more than sectional interest. The intellectual status of the clergy, as we have stated above, concerns the whole community; for if the clergy be not the intellectual equals of the laity, they cannot exercise leadership even in spiritual matters; and should the laity of any church disavow its natural spiritual leaders, the contagion of disavowal might work a far-reaching estrangement of clergy and people resulting in general spiritual and moral retrogression. The faculty of Woodstock College complain that ministerial students-in-training lose too much time in undertaking avoidable ministerial duties, that they are not inclined to thoroughness in

their work, that they rush on to what is more advanced before they master the elements. They submit that "less" well done is better than "more" which is only a smattering; that a "pinch" of metaphysics obtained when the mind is unripe to receive it, is not so good as a real acquisition in some branch of science or department of history which is capable of being mentally assimilated. They submit, furthermore, that students in-training should not be recognized by the ministerial committee of the Church until they have passed the equivalent of the high school entrance examination—a not too difficult acquirement, surely. The Baptists are among the foremost denominations of Ontario in making provision for the education of their clergy, and we trust that the action of the faculty of Woodstock College may be followed, on the part of their young ministerial candidates, by a corresponding increase of zeal to be armed at all points for their life-long battle.

In an interview with a reporter, Principal McCabe, of the Ottawa Normal School, has stated his belief in the reasonableness of the rule restricting communication or correspondence between the male and female students attending the provincial normal schools. The rule was established when the Toronto Normal School was first started, twenty-five years ago, and for many years was enforced so rigidly, and one almost may say so absurdly, that there were many who advocated its abrogation. If the spirit of the regulation, rather than its mere letter, be that which is most regarded, its enforcement is wise and defensible. But if, for example, it be made, as once it was, a misdemeanor, for a young lady to recognize, or a young gentleman to bow to, an old friend, as they daily meet or pass one another on the road to or from their common place of instruction, then human nature is being imposed upon and will soon rebel. The heads of these institutions cannot be too careful in seeing that every possible shield be raised to protect the good name, of the young people entrusted to their charge, and that every influence be exerted to maintain and strengthen their character, but the defence should be natural, and such as will be approved of by the common sense of the students themselves. Young women need but few hints to be made fully alive to the importance to themselves of that reserve of manner and modesty of bearing which are their best safeguards when away from their natural protectors, and young men are equally amenable to the dictates of honor and their sense of right.