

A Student's Appreciation, 1817.

(The following letter, sent by a student to the committee of the Stepney Academical Institution on the 27th May, 1817, may be suggestive to present-day students.)

“THE four years on which I entered, 3rd August 1813, being nearly expired, I take the present opportunity of expressing my gratitude for the favours I have received through your patronage. Next to being called by the grace of God from darkness to light, and to the great work of the Christian ministry, I consider my being placed at Stepney one of the greatest blessings Heaven could bestow. Here I have been led more fully to perceive the darkness of the human mind. Here, while engaged in the study of the Bible, I have been led to behold more clearly the exceeding riches of Divine grace, and the suitability of the Saviour to man's necessities; and I trust I may say that here too the fire of devotion has been strengthened. I know that it is frequently said that, in societies of this kind, the student's mind is so taken up by literary pursuits that piety is suffered to languish, and not infrequently to die. What may have taken place in other institutions, it is not for me to say: to one thing I can bear testimony that, in your institution by regularity of discipline—by earnest and affectionate admonitions—and, above all, by holiness of life our Tutors have ever led us to consider piety as the first thing to be regarded; as that only, which can sanctify our studies and make us blessings to the Church and to the world.

“To my Tutors, as well as to you, I shall feel myself indebted to the latest period of my life, and affection for them, I hope, will ever be cherished in my breast. I trust the instructions which they have imparted will not be as seed sown on a barren soil. It is my earnest prayer that they may have to rejoice over me as a son whom they have brought up for the service of the sanctuary. If I feel one regret, in reviewing the period I have spent in this house, it is that my acquisitions bear so small a proportion to the advantages with which I have been favoured. Yet, I trust, I have tasted so much of the pleasure of study as will not only induce me still to engage in it but will lead me to consider it a source of the purest and highest enjoyment. On leaving this place I look forward to the more stated engagements of a minister with mingled feelings of fear and joy. Wherever I may be placed by providence I trust it will ever be my determination to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Adhering to the truths which He has taught I would pray, and humbly hope to prove a blessing to the Church, and an honour to your Institution.”