

## DANGEROUS PRAYERS.

"I want you to spend fifteen minutes every day praying for Foreign Missions," said the pastor to some young people in his congregation. "But beware how you pray, for I warn you that it is a very costly experiment."

"Costly?" they asked in surprise.

"Ay, costly," he cried. "When Carey began to pray for the conversion of the world, it cost him himself, and it cost those who prayed with him very much. Braunerl prayed for the dark skinned savages, and, after two years of blessed work, it cost him his life. Two students in Mt. Moody's summer school began to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth more servants into his harvest, and lo! it is going to cost our country five thousand young men and women who have, in answer to this prayer, pledged themselves to the work. Be sure it is a dangerous thing to pray in earnest for this work; you will find that you cannot pray and withhold your labor, or pray and withhold your money; nay, that your very life will no longer be your own, when your prayers begin to be answered."

## THE ELDERSHIP.

Brethren of the eldership, a word with you. When you entered upon your office you assumed the following vow. "Do you promise, through grace, to perform all the duties incumbent on you with zeal and fidelity, following after righteousness, faith, charity? Answer, I do." Brethren, are you keeping that vow? Are you endeavoring to perform all the duties of your high office with zeal and fidelity?

There are some elders who seem to think their duty is simply to act as brakeman. Now, a brakeman is an important officer, if he is careful to draw the brakes only when the train is starting on a down-grade; but if he is so thoughtless as not to consider whether it is up grade or down, and persists in drawing the brakes all the time, he is a very poor officer. The train would be better without him, notwithstanding some down grades, for then it would move, though it did move sometimes too fast.

There is a familiar story of an elder who was ambitious to be put into the office, and, when asked concerning his qualifications for it, gave an answer that had the merit of being candid, at least, and one that expresses what seems to be the governing principle of many who hold that position. He was asked if he could be a leader in Sabbath school work: he thought not; then, if he could take a prominent part in the prayer-meet-

ings; for this he thought he was not fitted; then, could he be useful in visiting from house to house and comforting and instructing the Lord's people; he thought he could not do that. "What could you do then?" he was asked, "that would make you an efficient elder?" His reply was: "I think if I were in the Session and anything new was proposed, I could offer a strong objection."

That is precisely what very many elders do and about all that they do. I once heard a pastor say. "When I am planning aggressive work for my congregation and trying to lift all the interests of the Church to a higher plane, the question on my mind is not, How much will my elders help me in this? but, How much difficulty will I have in overcoming their opposition to it? This is not true of all our elders, for there are those who are powers for good in their congregations, but it is true of very many."

My brother, now reading this, how is it with you? If you were to dip to-day, would the church over which you have been ordained an elder be better or worse off than it is? Would there be many families who would say, "We all miss him at our fireside, when sickness and sorrow come again?" Would there be young men who would say, "I will miss the good man who gave me counsel and encouragement when I was disposed to go astray?" Would the prayer-meeting miss the voice of one who always led them in plain, earnest prayer for things they needed in every-day life? Would the Sabbath school miss you as one who had led them as a good under-shepherd into the fold of God? Or, would the pastor, in his secret chamber, draw a long sigh of relief at the thought of one who had always stood in the way of his cherished plans being now out of the way? And would the people, who have it in their hearts to advance the cause of the Master in your congregation, say "Now he is gone, we can go forward?" Do not think I am drawing a fancy picture; I am describing just what many a pastor feels, and what the working element in the church feels concerning many elders. Do you want to live so that the church, over which you have been solemnly ordained a ruling elder, will be glad at heart, though of course they do not say it, when you die or move away?

It is time for the eldership to wake up and realize more the nature of their ordination vows. Their office is parallel to that of the minister except in teaching, and their responsibilities are equal to his in the oversight of the flock of God. The blood of souls will rest on them if they are faithful.

--United Presbyterian.