

In the sixth place, in praying for the sick it is easy to lose sight of an essential feature of prayer. The Son of God could pray, when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and as if He would give a touching example to His suffering followers, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me; nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

"This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He heareth us." Without submission to the will of God as infinitely right and infinitely wise, prayer is not prayer; and one is often shocked by an exhibition among the faith-healers of a rashness and irreverence of demand that would

"Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,  
Rejudge His justice, be god of God."

In the seventh place, even the apostles could not always heal, nor were they exempt from the law of bodily suffering. At one time Paul was used to restore health "that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and evil spirits went out of them." At another time he writes "Trophimus have I left at Mile-tum sick." At one time he shook a viper that had fastened on his hand into the fire and felt no harm. At another time he writes: "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." It may be good to be strong, but it is better to have the power of Christ tenting over us and around us in our weakness. It may be good to be in health, but it is better to have the sweet promise fulfilled, "The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

While, therefore, it is perfectly proper to pray about sickness, and to pray with a faith that is no faith unless it is in accordance with God's will, let us remember that sickness is not the worst thing that can befall a Christian. For eighteen hundred years all Christians have passed through death, and millions of them through a death of violence. We are doing no wrong when we pray for ourselves or for others: "Lord, if it please Thee, show Thy healing power;" but we are certainly doing right when we pray: "Father, glorify Thy name."

"Yes, ask it for ourselves, if we need healing,

Pleading those instances of olden cure;

But if He then refuse, we still will trust Him,

And He will make it happier to endure.

"Ay, happier to bear with Him the suffering,

Or even death itself, with Him close by,

For in His presence there is joy forever.

And with Him near, it is not death to die.

He has purposes of love to accomplish through disease and pain, of which we may know nothing at present, and while still praying in the simplicity of an unflinching confidence, we are not to suppose that His omnipotence is a mere servant to obey our behests, apart from His holier and wiser counsels. If nothing else was gained by our sickness, it teaches us our need, for "they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." It is when shut up in the sick chamber the Christian begins to sing with new meaning:—

"The Great Physician now is near,  
The sympathizing Jesus."

Whether, then, in active or passive service, let it be our aim to do or suffer the will of God. The sorrowing and silent and submissive children of our Father shall soon find to their everlasting joy, that

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

From the "Mystery of Suffering," by J. D. Brookes.

### LESSONS LEARNT DURING MY MINISTRY.

By a Middle-aged Minister.

Among those lessons the first I shall mention relates to the pulpit. Like other ministers, I have frequently asked myself how I could best preserve freshness in my preaching, and the best answer I have been able to give to that question is the one Paul gave to Timothy:—"Give attention to reading." As a rule a minister has to prepare two sermons a week, besides occasional addresses, and he cannot keep giving out at that rate unless he receives. Of course there is a difference in minds. Some are more spontaneous in their operation than others; they give forth thoughts as a spring gives forth water. But even the spring requires the rain and the snow to come, or it will soon be dry, and the most original mind requires to be refreshed and stimulated by the thoughts of other men or its own will become feeble. And as this is true of the gifted, much more so is it of ordinary men. To them Paul's command comes as an absolute imperative.

But a minister cannot read everything, and if he could he should not. Like other men, therefore, he should make his choice, and that should be determined largely by his own mental tastes and aptitudes. If he confine his reading to books which have a specific bearing on his own profession, he will inevitably become narrow in his outlook, and run the risk of remaining or becoming narrow in his sympathies, and he cannot afford to be either. Reading beyond his specific line will also furnish him with illustrations that will enrich his sermons and increase their usefulness, and as they appeal to the imagination, they are often fresh in the mind when the sermon has faded from it.

The books that I have found the most useful have been those which have stimulated and strengthened my own mind. Such books do not belong to one age, nor were they written by men belonging to one church, or even holding the same creed, but by men who embodied the best of their respective ages, and whose words move the soul as the warmth of spring moves the trees to put forth blossom and fruit.

Another lesson relating to the pulpit is the

### Importance of Positive Teaching.

The doctrines of Christianity, especially those relating to God and immortality, are so great and mysterious that men not only think differently of them, but in some minds doubts arise respecting them. When this happens to a minister his experience must be terrible, for he regards those doctrines as being associated with man's highest good, and if they fail all fails. At such a time it would be sheer folly to preach his doubts, for that which has chilled and paralyzed his own soul can never warm and strengthen the souls of his hearers. Nay, it would probably lead them to break away from their moorings and to drift on the sea of uncertainty, where they would be in danger of "making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience," which is the greatest loss a man can sustain. But there is no need for him to preach his doubts. As a rule they refer only to a particular doctrine or to certain phrases of that doctrine, and, whilst the uncertainty continues, he can preach those about which he is certain, and in the light of those truths he will probably lose his doubts respecting others; for contact with

truth enables a man to detect error. Further, the men who have moved the world to goodness and to God were all great believers, and he who would emulate the results of their ministry must also emulate their faith.

I have also learnt that it is of the highest importance for a minister to be charitable in his judgments respecting men. Men are often better than they seem, for no man can fully express himself.

By faith, by love, by hope's transcendent dower,  
We feel that we are greater than we know.

Charitable judgments are also necessary because of our lack of knowledge. We know not the burden which some men have to carry, and for which they are not responsible; the tendencies which they have inherited and which at times are so imperious that they spurn the dictates of conscience and the guidance of reason. Such men can be good, but their task is difficult, and if they fail at times we should judge leniently of their failures.

Another lesson I have learnt is that of recognizing the young. This does not mean that the old should be ignored. They have borne the heat and burden of the day, and have largely created what the young inherit, so they should be esteemed highly and loved for their work's sake. Further, long service has in many cases given them "understanding of the times so that they can teach Israel what should be done." But the young have also their gifts—energy, hopefulness and the disposition to labor. If there be only one of these elements in a church, or if both be there but in opposition, that church is sure to fail. There is no need, however, for opposition or even for friction, and when guidance has been given sympathetically, I have never known the young resent it. Young men like to be trusted; they may make mistakes, but those mistakes are nothing compared with that of the Church which gives them nothing to do. I have learnt, therefore, to trust the young, and to secure for them the sympathetic guidance of the aged.

### VICTORIA, B. C.

Victoria Presbytery appoints Rev. Dr. Campbell, Rev. W. Leslie Clay, Thornton Fell, and Professor Dyke as its representatives at the general assembly to meet in Montreal in June next.

Rev. W. Leslie Clay, who has the oversight of the home mission department of the Presbytery, submitted a full and very encouraging report as to the condition of the churches throughout the district. Full details of the work at the following places were given:—Sooke, Colwood, Otter Point, Cedar Hill, Knox church, Spring Ridge; St. Columba, Oak Bay; Duncan's, Somenos, Chemainus, Crofton, Wellington, Extension, Englishman's River; Denman, Union Bay; Pender Island, Gabriola Island, Galiano Island and Alberni.

The most interesting matter discussed at a recent meeting of Presbytery was the proposal to establish a Presbyterian Theological college on Vancouver Island, for the education of the youth of the country as ministers. This is a matter which has been occupying the attention of the authorities of the Presbyterian church of this part of the country for some time past, and regarding which some definite decision is eagerly looked for. The purpose of establishing such a college on the Island would be to enable young men desiring to become Presbyterian ministers to accomplish their wish without going to study at a university in the East, as is now the case. The course would at first, at any rate be of a purely religious nature, the idea being to give the students the necessary grounding in theology and kindred subjects rather than to provide a general education.