

The Presbyterian Review.

Vol. X.—No. 33.

TORONTO, FEBRUARY 22, 1894.

\$1.50 per Annum.

Life.

Life may be likened to the wind and sea,
With its two calms of morning and of eve—
Slumbering babyhood and drowsy age.
A few short summers, and the breeze is out,
Spinning the lively ripple of the wave,
As the boy spins his top, or skipping on,
A tiptoe, like the maiden with her rope.
Then comes the billowy time of hope and youth,
Fair winds and dashing seas, that brook no rein,
And may not be restrained; that dance and sing,
And revel in the freedom that pertains
To flights of passion, free, without reserve.
Anon the solemn ground swell, when the storm,
Fever, and impulse of life's madcap race
Have sobered to reflection, and the day
Of sunshine follows the wild night of pain
That passed for sweetest pleasure, and well nigh
Made sudden wreck and ending of the man.

CHARLES SANGSTER.

The Eldership.

REV. D. V. MAYS.

ONE fact is worth ten thousand theories. Knowledge derived from experience and actual observation cannot be disproved by centuries of skeptical contradiction. When the latent power of a godly, Spirit-filled elder is brought out in company with a pastor in winning many souls to Christ, why should not other such elders be encouraged and led by their pastors, or by the condition of the perishing, to go and do likewise?

No doubt the presentation of our Church's need of a greater putting forth of the latent power of the eldership would be profitable. Which of our experienced pastors has not witnessed such illustrations of the manner in which the Spirit uses these anointed "helps" to largely increase the number of converts. The presentation of this subject, therefore, ought not only to be profitable but should be productive of incalculable good. The quickening of the churches depends chiefly upon a revived ministry and eldership. Unless both these classes of the spiritual overseers of the flock of Christ be filled with the Spirit, Zion languishes.

In what respects does the power and efficiency of the eldership need to be more fully developed and utilized? This question presses to the front in our own denomination, and in all others using an equivalent lay agency in promoting the spiritual interests of mankind.

The spiritual power which resides in both Teaching and Ruling Elders is the power of the Holy Spirit. Like the elders of the Church of Ephesus they are made overseers of the flock by the Holy Spirit. Since these two offices are designated in the Scriptures by terms which are interchangeable, each elder in modern times is charged, no less than was young Timothy, to stir up the gift that was in him by the putting on of hands, and not to neglect the gift which was in him. Each elder is under equally solemn obligations to stir up the same gift which should have been in him from the time of his ordination. Had it not been in him from that hour, he would

not have been made overseer by the Holy Ghost, but simply by a majority vote of his fellow church-members.

It is in their clearer and more abiding consciousness of the divine call and anointing, and in this stirring up and greater putting forth of the power of the Holy Spirit within them, that the eldership most needs to increase their efficiency.

Then, as to the duties assigned to this office in the Scriptures, is the power to feed the Church of God being developed; or is it not latent in many instances?

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who are also an elder, feed the flock of God which is among you." Revised version—tend. Is any acting elder not feeding any portion of the Church of God? If not, why not, when the duty is imposed in God's word? If feeding adults or children in the home, in the midweek prayer-meeting, the cottage prayer-meeting, or the Bible school, or in the mission school, or in family visitation, or in the inquiry room, he must be increasing his knowledge of God's word and be growing in gracious ability to feed therefrom those committed to his charge. For the habitual absence of an elder from the Sabbath school or mission school, where the feeding of the lambs and of the sheep is being done, there can be found no excuse unless he be superannuated or otherwise providentially hindered.

Then, as to the elder's duty to tend the flock, or to be diligent in its spiritual oversight, is not this duty delegated too much to the ministerial member of session? Is there no power here undeveloped? To exercise spiritual oversight in a general and formal way and to be diligent in this duty are quite different. Take heed to all the flock. Tend the flock of God which is among you. These commands are not diligently obeyed except where in some form family visitation is practiced by elders also. Family visiting by the elder or district visiting—some method of spiritual oversight systematically and diligently pursued—is an advantage and a duty both in country and city parishes. In our large city churches, if this assistance or that of a co-pastor is not employed, either the pastor is overtaxed or the extension of the church is diminished. It is true of several denominations in our large cities that salaries paid to assisting clergy are often in excess to the salary paid in one body to one overtaxed pastor. And yet the ruling elders are required in Scripture to feed and tend the Church of God. The fault is not in lack of ability but in the lack of development of latent spiritual power.

The elders are the spiritual leaders of the Church. If the spirit of work be latent in the church, the first necessity is that the elders should put forth their power as spiritual leaders in every form of the church's work, in promoting full attendance of the membership upon the public services and in striving to secure the attendance of the neglectors of the sanctuary.

Concluded next week.