

do everything at once, it takes time." From the top of a mountain we took a farewell view of the Pacific Ocean, and before night arrived at Ing-siang-khee, where the stone chapel is going up. The masons said they had had only four fine days; the progress of the building showed they had made good use of the time. Next night we stayed at Kelung, and the day following reached Banghan. On Thursday morning, December 17, about eleven o'clock, we reached the steamer landing. The steam launch had not yet arrived; when she did we went on board and they started off at once without waiting for any other passengers.

We got to Tamsui about one o'clock, having been away nineteen days, seven of which were fine. We travelled about 240 miles. The roads in the plain during the wet weather were simply mud, the worst I have seen in China; it would have been easier travelling in the flooded rice fields.

We visited twenty-six towns and villages, in twenty-four of which there are chapels, and Dr. Mackay and Pastor Ahoa baptized 213 persons, and preached to more than 3,200, besides extracting I don't know how many teeth.

Before Dr. Mackay visits them again the people in the plain will have built four new chapels, and the stone church at Ing-siang-khee will be finished. He sent a preacher and his wife to the village, where he was so pressed to stay to dinner, a day or two after we arrived at Tamsui.

From March, 1886, to March, 1887, 315 persons were baptized in the whole mission, sixteen died, making a total of eighty-nine deaths since the mission began; there are now 2,546 baptized members.

There are two native pastors, thirty-eight stations with thirty-eight preachers, fifty-three elders, forty-five deacons and twenty students.

HOW TO CONDUCT THE PRAYER MEETING.

BY THE REV. A. T. WOLFF, D.D., ALTON, ILL.

It is a trite but true saying that the prayer meeting is the thermometer of the Church. It marks the spiritual temperature. If the prayer meeting is cold, formal, dismal, you will find the Church a moral refrigerator to chill out spiritual life. If the prayer meeting is full of enthusiasm and life, has the blaze of the divine presence, you will find a warm, spiritual, working Church. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the prayer meeting be properly conducted.

A properly conducted prayer meeting depends upon both leader and people. I would not underrate the magnetic power, tact and influence of a deeply spiritual leader; but unless the people study God's Word as a preparation, and go in the spirit of prayer, his best efforts will be little better than useless. If both leader and people go there with the thorough imbue-ment of God's Spirit, there will be an interesting and spiritual meeting.

The general idea is that the pastor should lead the meeting, and usually this seems the proper thing. If there be laymen who are efficient leaders, the pastor had better share the burden with them. There are a great many preacher-killed meetings. The minister opens with a long prayer, lectures half an hour or more, a few hymns are sung, two or three elders pray, the benediction is pronounced and the people go home. No wonder the prayer meeting dwindles to small proportions. Dr. Gray, of the *Interior*, says that two or three D.D.'s can kill any prayer meeting. He is right.

The subject for the meeting should be practical, and should be announced the Sabbath before from the pulpit. This gives the people time to go prepared with a few words, a passage of Scripture, or a hymn bearing directly on the topic. The lesson should be read early in the meeting. The leader should sound the keynote in a short, pithy address. Let the people take up the subject with a half-dozen or more short talks. The hymns also should be in the line of the subject, so as to keep the unity of the meeting. But there should be sufficient elasticity, so as not to shut out any matter of Christian life or experience that may be near the people's hearts.

The prayers should be brief and pointed. A long-winded leader and two or three old saints can pray any meeting to death. It is very easy to run into the habit of using like the heathen "vain repetitions," and

expecting like the Pharisee "to be heard for much speaking." I used to know an eccentric old minister who usually compassed the universe in his prayers. He made a fine prayer, it couldn't be otherwise, for he generally quoted several books of the Bible in the course of it, but on one occasion as he sat down, some one else was asked to pray. A bad boy growled out loud enough for all in the house to hear him, "No use for Uncle Blank to pray; the preacher has asked for everything."

We have not yet passed the period of long prayers. I would not do as I saw a brother minister do a few years ago, take a call bell into the stand, and if a brother prayed over two minutes tap him down. But I should insist on short prayers. The leader should regulate the prayers in his meeting. Be brief yourself, and insist on the same in others.

As far as possible, the exercises in a prayer meeting should be voluntary. It has a congealing effect to have to call on a person by name to lead in prayer. It is a good plan to make a list of all the members who will take part in the meetings. Say you have thirty or forty who will do so. Divide the list into four or five classes, and then notify the members of each class that, when it is their turn, they will positively be expected to be present specially prepared to speak and pray as they have opportunity. This will prevent the meeting from lagging, and will stimulate others.

Many of the ladies should take part in the prayer meeting. I can imagine our old divines of fifty years ago, and some modern ones, raising their hands in holy horror at this suggestion. But when I remember the grand work our ladies are doing for missions and temperance; that the best workers in many of our Churches are women; that many women have achieved successes in medicine, law and as lecturers; that many of them are accomplished lecturers in the home, it does seem too bad that their mouths should be closed in the social meetings of the Church. I for one will hail the day when, in all our Churches, the voices of our devoted Christian women will be heard not only in praise, but in prayer and testimony for the Lord who hath bought them with His own precious blood.

Other suggestions I would add in brief.

Begin at the time announced, and close promptly on the hour.

Let there be no stiffness. Make every one feel that he belongs to the family.

Be yourself. Be natural. Use no holy tones, and indulge in no funeral faces. Let the people be themselves. If some brother indulges in stentorian tones, all right. The mighty blast of powder is as essential to blow up the rocks, as the constant drops to wear them away.

Above all, recognize the divine presence, and pray for the divine help. The prayer meeting should be deeply spiritual. As Christ's people cannot meet in His name without His being in their midst, let every one be hallowed and sweetened by His Spirit. Thus shall these meetings be blessed to our spiritual growth. And we shall go out from them better prepared to resist temptations, and to fight manfully in the conflict that tries us.

SPECIALIZATION IN A THEOLOGICAL COURSE.

MR. EDITOR,—The articles which appeared during the winter in the *Knox College Monthly* bearing on this question show plainly that there is a lurking dissatisfaction somewhere with reference to the present curriculum, or rather curricula, in theology in that college. I say curricula, for the trouble seems to lie in the curriculum for the degree of B.D., rather than in that of the ordinary theological course. One writer suggests "a division of the studies of the college (Knox) into two clear parts: those departments that might be compulsory, and those that might be optional." Now, the actual studies of the present theological course required by the curriculum are Exegesis, Bible Criticism, Apologetics, Church History, Systematic Theology and Homiletics. Which of these, I ask, are essential, and which might be made eligible? The principles of Exegesis and the ability to put them into practice are certainly necessary. The only question that may be raised here at all is, Whether the exegesis shall be of the English translation of the Scriptures, or of the Greek and

Hebrew also? Biblical Criticism is necessary; it may, in some manner, be said to be a sub-department of Exegesis. Apologetics is, without doubt, an essential part of a course in theology. It is the department *par excellence* at the present time. Church History cannot be dispensed with; on the contrary a more extensive knowledge of the history of other branches of the Church besides our own than is generally required would be a valuable addition to the learning of our ministers. Systematic Theology is the ground plan of a man's theological repertory. Homiletics, too, is indispensable as well to the theologian's success in practical life as to his general knowledge. They are all alike necessary, and, therefore, ought to be, as they now are, compulsory.

Again, so far from this curriculum of study being too extensive, it is found advisable to supplement it by lectures on other subjects than those mentioned. True, "the field is too large for thorough investigation in three sessions," short as those sessions are; but no one ever dreams of completely mastering any one subject in any single college course, if, indeed, in a lifetime. At the best, we can only acquire a little knowledge, along with the faculty of acquiring more, and of applying knowledge already attained. For example, Apologetics is a life study. It is, in fact, the great question of the age to be able to defend the doctrines of Christianity and the authenticity and authority of the Scriptures; and actual intercourse with man in daily life, coupled with theoretical practice, is the only adequate means of mastering it. No college course or curriculum can be rendered perfect. If, then, it errs by defect, or by excess in any particular, while, at the same time, it is made as comprehensive as circumstances admit, the student should only be guided by its imperfections in the further pursuit of his studies.

It is quite evident, then, that specialization in a short three-term course is as impracticable as is the mastery of the whole curriculum. But it will be found that most men specialize after their college days are over. And should they not be encouraged to do so?

I have often thought it a thing to be regretted that in theology a man may complete his course and be licensed without proceeding to a degree, whereas in the arts and sciences a course is considered incomplete until a degree has been conferred. I admit the difficulty is one that cannot readily be removed in the present status of education, especially as the demand for clergymen is so urgent. Would it not, then, be advisable to re-arrange the B.D. curriculum, so that more of our students would be led to graduate in theology? Certainly the degree should not be cheapened by any means. But a proper readjustment of the curriculum would not cheapen the degree. In order to proceed to the degree of B.D. in Knox College, according to the present arrangement, the student is required to pass two examinations, or, rather, an examination in two departments (for both may be written upon at one examination). The second is but a continuation of the first, as both are in the same line of study as the ordinary course.

A much better system of examination for this degree, it seems to me, Mr. Editor, would be to allow the first of these two departments to remain general, very much as it now stands; but let an option be given in the second. For instance, let a man be graduated in some one of the following departments: I. Apologetics; II. Greek Testament; III. Hebrew Scriptures; IV. Systematic Theology, or, V. Church History and Pastoral Theology. This is the plan adopted in Trinity College, and it is found, I believe, to be very satisfactory. Many men would graduate in some one or other of these special courses, who will not do so while the curriculum remains as it is now. The standard of scholarship would be raised, and an increased wealth of theological literature might be looked for as one among the many other good results.

I have written this letter, Mr. Editor, feeling that some change in the B.D. course is necessary, and in the hope that the matter may be brought to the more immediate attention of our ministers, and thus receive the consideration it deserves. As a student of Knox College I am an interested party. T. NATTRESS.

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THERE is much truth in the observation that nearly all the effective workers of the world, and especially those who carry forward special enterprises, are persons full of hope.