

Pastor and People.

WATCH, MOTHER, WATCH.

Mother, watch the little feet,
Climbing o'er the garden wall,
Bounding through the busy street,
Ranging cellar, shed and hall.
Never count the moments lost.
Never mind the time it cost ;
Little feet will go astray ;
Guide them, mother, while you may.

Mother, watch the little hand,
Picking berries by the way,
Making houses in the sand,
Tossing up the fragrant hay.
Never dare the question ask,
"Why to me this weary task?"
These same little hands may prove
Messengers of light and love.

Mother, watch the little tongue,
Prattling eloquent and wild,
What is said and what is sung
By the happy, joyous child.
Catch the word while yet unspoken,
Stop the vow before 'tis broken ;
This same tongue may yet proclaim
Blessings on the Saviour's name.

Mother, watch the little heart,
Beating soft and warm for you ;
Wholesome lessons now impart,
Keep, O keep that young heart true ;
Extricating every weed,
Sowing good and precious seed ;
Harvest rich you then may see
Ripening for eternity.

ON PREACHERS AND PREACHING.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D.

VII.—THE MINISTER'S PREPARATION—INTELLECTUAL.

(Continued.)

The preparation made at school and college is but the beginning, that must be carried on, along such lines as are laid down by Dr. Shedd, and, not turning aside from these, on others also. The minister's intellectual preparation is to go on throughout his life. He will keep his knowledge of the original languages of the Scriptures in hand, so that he can get the force of a word or the value of a sentence when he wants it. He will keep a good, clear grip of the faith once delivered to the saints, so that he will not allow the unknown or the sceptic or the rationalist to disturb what he has known for years. He will have a philosophy of sound common sense and sweet reasonableness that will endure when the idle phantasms of unbiblical systems have passed away and been forgotten. He will have a broad outlook on the history of the world that reveals the providence of God ; on the science of to-day that discovers the wisdom and omnipotence of God ; on the literature and art that have accumulated in the past, that unveil the workings of the human mind and the longings of the heart, thereby marking out the path along which the ship of humanity has sailed over the wide sea of life. These are the broad features of the minister's intellectual preparation, to which, to some extent, all will attend. Beyond these there is room for a marked individuality, such as we discover in the works of our great preachers. They are not at all like to each other in any respect save one, and that is they preach the same Saviour and glorify the same Lord.

Read the Reformers, and they are full of homely story and strong statement of Gospel truth ; read the Puritans and they are bespangled with heathen maxims and telling sentences, read Arnot and he is strong and incisive with the force of physical illustration ; read the early Methodists, and they are tender with the pathos of human experience ; read Guthrie, and he is rich as an ancient tapestry with the pictures of voyage and travel ; read Hamilton, and he is bright and beautiful with the lights of science, literature and life ; read Spurgeon, and he is patched with parable, proverb, anecdote and story ; read Baldwin Brown and he is mellow with the mingling lights of the middle ages and massive, though a broadly human and rational view of truth.

Whatever the minister studies will strike through the web of his words like the threads of gold or silver, and tell the character of his reading. John Mason, in his treatise on "Self-Knowledge," says truly : "Your disposition will be suitable to that which you most frequently think on ; for the soul is, as it were, tinged with the colour and complexion of its own thoughts." This is a sound principle, and by its application we can tell the books with which speakers or writers hold converse.

The minister whose mind is stored with knowledge—from whatever sources drawn—will be greatly aided in the discharge of his duties. Philip Henry used to say : "I read other books that I may be the better able to understand the Scriptures." Every one that has read much can appreciate the truth of this observation. The Bible is to all books what Christ is to all men. It is the book, the corner-stone of all literatures, as Christ is the Man, the Crown and Glory of the race. It is a gem of ten thousand facets, that flashes its light upon all thoughts of the mind, and all things of the

life of man and the world. Hence its marvellous capability of illustration from all literature, science, art and life.

This intellectual preparation is for the accomplishment of the highest object possible, the elucidation of the truth of God and the salvation of the soul of man. David Livingstone learned Gaelic that he might be able to read the Bible to his mother, who knew that language best. That is just what all our foreign missionaries are doing every day they live.

It is a wise observation of the famous John Livingstone. "A man should especially read the writings and labour to follow the gifts of those whom God hath in the most eminent manner blest with the converting and confirming of their hearers, rather than those who seem to have rare gifts for learning and delectation without success." A study of the lives of those who have been most successful in winning souls is of great consequence to the minister in his work, such as Netherton, W. C. Burns, David Sandeman, Harlan Page, the Tennants, Finney, D. L. Moody, Haslam, Spurgeon, Brownlow North, Payson, Murray McCheyne, Cæsar Malan, Richard Knill and Peter Cartwright. And also the circumstances attending the preaching of John Livingstone at the Kirk of Shotts in 1630, Jonathan Edwards at Northampton in the United States in 1734, and Whitfield at Kingswood and Cambuslang in 1741. The lives of those who have had to do with religious awakenings are full of suggestions that are of value and of intellectual quickening, which is of greater account than any measure of material they may furnish.

The books the minister reads mould his thoughts and give tone to his life, filling him with evangelical fervour or subduing his spirit to a carnal moderation that cares little for spiritual conquests or advances.

Of late many have told the world "what books have influenced them," and the narration is exceedingly interesting. Had we space we might gather from the lives of godly and useful ministers what books they fed upon, as the bees upon the flowers. Did we do that we should find our old Scotch theology one of the principal fertilizers of the greatest minds of the past. Being fontal sources, furnishing such men as Baxter and Owen and Cecil and Spurgeon. But looking in another direction Payson says : "The books which I have found most useful to me are Edwards' works—'Brainard's Life,' Newton's 'Letters,' 'Owen's Treatise on Indwelling Sin,' 'Mortification of Sin in Believers,' the One Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm, and Thomas à Kempis' 'Imitation of Christ,' translated by Payne, and 'Baxter's Reformed Pastor' and 'Saints' Rest.'" The book that revealed to Dr. Thomas Chalmers the deficiencies of his theological system and the great want in his own heart—"Wilberforce's Practical View of Christianity"—would in many quarters do grand service yet. It is just such a book as needs to lie on a minister's table side by side with an unabridged copy of "Baxter's Reformed Pastor," both stimulating books, beyond many, and everywhere fitted to awaken and keep awake the soul to the high demands made upon it in holding fast the faith of the Gospel, and also in labouring diligently to save men.

When Jonathan Edwards was chosen by the trustees of Nassau Hall, New Jersey, President of the College, he wrote to them a letter in which he presented the objections that arose in his mind to the accepting of the office—in which we find this account of his mode of carrying on his studies : "My method of study, from my first beginning the work of the ministry, has been very much by writing ; applying myself in this way to improve every important hint ; pursuing the clue to my utmost when anything in reading, meditation or conversation has been suggested to my mind that seemed to promise light on any weighty point, thus penning what appeared to me my best thoughts on innumerable subjects for my own benefit. The longer I prosecuted my studies in this method the more habitual it became and the more pleasant and profitable I found it. The further I travelled in this way the more and wider the field opened which has occasioned my laying out many things in my mind to do in this manner if God spares my life which my heart hath built much upon ; particularly many things against most of the prevailing errors of the present day which I cannot with any patience see maintained (to the utter subverting of the Gospel of Christ) with so high a hand and so long-continued a triumph, with so little control, when it appears so evident to me that there is truly no foundation for any of this glorying and insult."

Study must be carried on continuously, through unfavourable as well as favourable times. One of the great advantages arising from a college course is a studious habit. This must be preserved and improved. The strength or the weakness of the minister as an intellectual force lies there, and he must be careful of his strength in these days of general enlightenment. He cannot afford to lag behind the crowd that reads. He is a leader, and should go in the van rather than come up in the rear.

Hence he must take time for study. An active mind in a small charge has a most enviable position for carrying on intellectual pursuits. Did not Samuel Rutherford lay the foundations of his erudition in Anwoth, where he rose at three o'clock in the morning to work hard at the questions that were agitating his times. So it has been and is with many others.

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

March 8.
1891

NAAMAN HEALED.

1 Kings 17:1-24

GOLDEN TEXT.—Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases.—Psalm ciii. 3.

INTRODUCTORY

When people or nations enjoy great privileges there is sometimes a tendency to indulge in the spirit exemplified in the parable where the Pharisee stands by himself and says : "I thank Thee, O Lord, for I am not as others." To guard us against this tendency there are many exhortations and examples to show that this is an unworthy spirit. The Jewish nation was specially privileged, but there are instances of the extension of divine mercy to others beyond the Jewish pale. To-day's lesson furnishes a notable example.

I. The Leprous Syrian General.—This man occupied a high position in the kingdom of Syria. He was the commander-in-chief of the army. He had a warm place in the king's favour. Honours were conferred upon him. He had been a successful general, and possibly an accomplished administrator of affairs. It is here said that "by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria." All good gifts are God's bestowment. In our own time there have been a number of important discoveries of monuments that have thrown great light on Scripture history, confirming the truthfulness and accuracy of the sacred narrative. It is supposed that monuments now in the British Museum refer to the deliverance here referred to when the Syrians, who had been for a time tributary to the Assyrians, struck for their independence and were successful. Naaman, the Syrian general, was a brave and courageous soldier, as well as a skilful leader of armies. But with all his endowments and with all his greatness he was suffering from a terrible and incurable disease—he was a leper. Leprosy so common in the East is a loathsome and fatal disease. Its approach is gradual. No pain is felt at first. It attacks the skin ; in some cases the skin becomes dry and hard, assuming a scaly whiteness. It steadily eats its way inward, and some of the features of the countenance and parts of the body rot away. It holds on its resistless course until the vital organs are affected, and then death comes as a welcome relief to the hopeless and helpless sufferer. In Scripture this fell disease is frequently employed as a type of sin. The resemblances between sin and leprosy are numerous and striking. It is foul, insidious in its approach, destructive and deadly.

II. The Captive Hebrew Maid.—The kingdom of Israel and Syria bordered with each other. The Syrians being a warlike people were in the habit of making plundering raids across the border. In one of these this young girl had been taken captive. She may have found her way into Naaman's house either by being presented to him by her captors or by purchase from them. She was maid to the Syrian general's wife. Though alone among idolaters this young girl remained faithful to God, just as Joseph did in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon. There she was a witness for God and embraced the opportunity presented her of testifying for Him. She had heard of Elisha's miraculous power, and was confident that he would by that means be able to effect a cure. She expresses the wish that Naaman were with the prophet in Samaria. He was told what the Hebrew captive had said. Then the king was told, and permission was given his general to visit the prophet in Samaria. It was a long journey, but was willingly undertaken in the hope that the deadly disease might be stayed.

III. The Syrian's Leprosy Cured.—The Syrian king readily enters into the design of visiting the Hebrew prophet. He gives him a letter of introduction to the King of Israel, probably Jehoram, the son of Ahab. The Syrian monarch possibly thought that was the easiest way to reach the prophet. Jehoram would, he thought, be able to command the prophet to comply with the request. Naaman, being a rich man, took costly gifts with him. It was customary then and is still when Eastern people desire a favour they make presents to those to whom requests are preferred. In addition to the rich garments, the ten changes of raiment, Naaman took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold, as near as can now be estimated about \$50,000. It was a large sum, but he was willing to give it if he only could be cured. In due time he reached the Israelitish capital, and presented his letter to Jehoram. On him it had a different effect from that intended. There was nothing about the prophet in the letter, and so the King of Israel hastily concludes that it is only a trick to pick a quarrel with him and an excuse for beginning a war. He rent his clothes in token of the dismay he felt on receiving this impossible request. The deadly nature of leprosy is seen in the exclamation of Jehoram, "Am I a God, to kill and make alive?" Elisha soon comes to know what has taken place, and sends the king a message telling him to send his Syrian visitor to him, "and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." Naaman with all the splendour of his rank drove to the humble abode of the prophet. Accustomed as he was to the obsequious attendance of those he condescended to honour with his visits, he no doubt expected the prophet to come out to him and show him deference and honour. The prophet, who bows reverently before God, does not cringe before his fellowman. It was his purpose to secure the spiritual as well as the bodily healing of the Syrian. Therefore he prepares his mind for the perception of the divine power by which the cure was to be effected. Elisha sent out his servant with the message that by the simple process of washing seven times in the Jordan the cruel disease would be removed. At this the great man is offended. It did not seem to be treating him with due respect. He expected the personal attention of the prophet, and that by a magic process he would cure him of his malady. The famous rivers of Damascus, Abana and Pharpar were nobler streams than the Jordan. Why not wash in them if that was all? "So he turned and went away in a rage." His servants, more sensible than he, suggested to him that, simple as the cure appeared, he might try it after all. If it had been a great and difficult thing he would willingly have obeyed the prophet's words, "how much rather then when he saith to thee : Wash and be clean." He reflected and resolved to try. He did as the prophet had told him, and the result was exactly as the prophet had said. Obedience to God's way brings healing. The cure is complete. Instead of the repulsive appearance of the leprosy skin, the healthful glow seen in the little child testifies to the completeness of the cure. "He was clean." He had obtained bodily and spiritual healing.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

Sin, like leprosy, is incurable by human means.

God can make the humblest child His messenger of salvation. The captive Hebrew maid's speech reached the ears of the greatest in the land.

Human pride stumbles at the simplicity of God's plan of salvation.

God's method of salvation revealed in the Scriptures is the only one that can redeem men from the condemnation and power of sin. The blood of Christ alone can cleanse from sin.

God's healing waters flow freely. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life."