

Pastor and People.

THE LITTLE WORN SHOES.

A mother stood by an open drawer,
"These now are too small to use."
And she laid away, with a careless hand,
A little worn pair of shoes.

Then she took baby up in her tender arms;
She knew 'twas her rightful place,
And the mother imprinted a loving kiss,
On the upturned baby face.

Little soft golden rings of hair,
And blue eyes open wide,
A sweet little mouth, and a dear little nose—
A baby who never cried.

But tired of laughing and toys and fun,
And tired of trying to creep,
The little head drooped on the mother's arm
And baby was fast asleep.

A year rolled on, and the mother's heart
Was chastened beneath the rod,
The house was still, with no baby voice,
For the baby was home with God.

The mother tried to forget her grief,
But she did not attempt to pray:
"She could not love God," she bitterly said,
"Who had taken her child away."

Again at that drawer the mother stood,
With a worldly and careless face,
But at something she saw a tear dropped down,
And hid in the folds of lace.

The little worn shoes she held in her hand,
As she stood in the twilight there.
"I must see my baby again," she cried,
And she fell on her knees in prayer.

In a sobbing voice she softly said,
"O God, Thy way I choose!"
And she tenderly kissed, and she clasped them close—
The little worn pair of shoes.

ON PREACHERS AND PREACHING.

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

IV—THE MINISTER'S PREPARATION—INTELLECTUAL.

As the minister's work is the highest to which man is called, so the intellectual preparation for it should be the best and completest possible. It can never be too high. The more thorough it is, the more comprehensive it is, the more perfect it is, the more available will it be for him in the wide range of his work. He deals with a theme that is all-inclusive. And one, too, that calls for the exercise of every power at its greatest force and in its best form. The noblest intellect, having received the highest culture, and attained the ripest scholarship, realizes its utter inadequacy to grapple with the problems the Bible presents touching the character of God, the destiny of men, the unfolding of the scheme of redemption, and the great things of God's law. How small the greatest becomes in this presence! How unfit to utter the deep things of God! How unequal to the task of rising to the height of this great argument, asserting eternal providence and justifying the ways of God to men.

Sir Walter Scott is reported to have said, that he was crippled in his literary work all his life by his ignorance. And how many ministers might testify to the same effect? Imperfect intellectual training is a serious hindrance to the expositor of God's Word. Being a book, which in its composition spreads itself over sixteen hundred years, it demands extensive knowledge to interpret it properly, and a thoroughly cultivated nature to enter into all its situations. The best university course, and the widest post-graduate course ever projected, is not too much preparation for the work to which the minister is called. With these he will only find the dark circle about him greating, and his thirst for knowledge deepening, and his regrets that he was not at the proper time more diligent and studious, increasing. He can look out and say: "Ah! there is a province I would like to travel through, and there, and there, and there, had I time, but calls are so urgent I am shut out from them all. I cannot do my duty to my people and turn aside to look on this great sight!"

The young man looking forward to the ministry often needs a counsellor as to the course he should take. And he is no friend of his who advises him to take the lightest, and the one that opens the door to him on the easiest conditions, and affords the most ready entrance. Sometimes financial considerations or family relations will make this a necessity, but it ought to be a strong reason that will warrant the giving of any such advice. The young man should take time for the fullest course in arts and divinity available to him. He should deliberately seek out the best masters—men who shall inspire him with an unquenchable love for the branch of study they teach. Men likely to awaken the dormant faculties and set them a-work forever. Dr. Dryasdust makes a poor professor in arts, and a wretched teacher in divinity. He is only fit to be burned. The young man should seek men with sap enough in them to make them pliant, and soul enough in them to appreciate the differences of mental development, or of spiritual growth in those who sit at their feet. This is so the young man a matter of unspeakable moment. It touches his life. And university and college life over he finds that he has but begun. He has just come to the commencement; he has gained an eminence whence he can look out over the field, and a preparation that enables him to use his

instruments, and a love that draws him on to renewed intercourse with the subjects whose acquaintance he has made. He cannot rest. He must go on. Certainly, he ought to go on. It bodes ill for him if he does not go on. He has just fitted himself for study, for dealing with truth, and now he must study. But, study what? The best that has been thought, the deepest that has been experienced, the greatest that has been known, and the highest that has been revealed. As Joseph Cook puts it: "Study only first rates, leave out all second rates." Dr. W. G. T. Shedd has a chapter on "The intellectual character and habits of the clergyman" that is, like all he writes, most excellent. Every minister should read that, and try to carry out its wise recommendations. We know nothing superior to it of its kind. In that, he gives a list of authors which he advises the minister to study all his days. In poetry he mentions the great creative minds, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton. In philosophy, Plato and Aristotle which represent all that is valuable in the philosophy of the ancient world, Cicero, De Cartes, Locke, Bacon, Kant and Leibnitz make up the eight authors which, he says, contain potentially the entire department of philosophy. In theology, he recommends Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Bernard, Calvin, Turretin, Owen, Howe, Baxter. And adds, "Let him begin anywhere in the series, and with any single writer, and he will be in line, and may form connections with the front and rear. . . . The clergyman should intellectually, as well as morally, lay great bases for eternity."

We admire the ancient orators, but seldom do we think of the cost at which they were made. It is well to listen to what Tacitus in his "Dialogue Concerning Oratory" tells us of the character of the ancient discipline: "The unwearied diligence of the ancient orators, their habits of meditation, and their daily exercise in the whole circle of arts and sciences, are amply displayed in the books they have transmitted to us." The treatise of Cicero, entitled "Brutus," is in all our hands. In that work after commemorating the orators of a former day he closes the account with the particulars of his own progress in the science, and the method he took in educating himself to the profession of oratory. He studied the civil law under Mucius Scaevola; he was instructed in the various systems of philosophy by Philo, of the academic school, and by Diodorus the stoic; and though Rome at that time abounded with the best professors, he made a voyage to Greece, and thence to Asia, in order to enrich his mind with every branch of learning. Hence that store of knowledge which appears in all his writings. Geometry, music and grammar and every useful art was familiar to him. He embraced the whole science of logic and ethics. He studied the operations of nature. His diligence of enquiry opened to him the long chain of causes and effects, and, in short, the whole system of physiology was his own. From a mind thus replenished it is no wonder, my good friends, that we see in the compositions of that extraordinary man that affluence of ideas, and that prodigious flow of eloquence. In fact, it is not with oratory as it is with other arts, which are confined to certain objects, and circumscribed within their own peculiar limits. He alone deserves the name of an orator who can speak in a copious style, with ease or dignity, as the subject requires; who can find language to decorate his argument; who through the passions can command the understanding; and, while he serves mankind, knows how to delight the judgment and the imagination of his audience. Such was, in ancient times, the idea of an orator.

We may be reminded that the minister's work is to preach the truth, and also, that the Spirit is promised to guide into all truth, and that He, the Holy Ghost, is the source, though the revelation of God, of all heavenly wisdom and preaching power. We do not forget that, but we remember also this, that Paul exhorts Timothy to "give attendance to reading." The Spirit of God does not lead a man to laziness. He does not accomplish His work through the ignorance or stupidity that is in any man. It is an incontrovertible fact that the most diligent and faithful in the work of the ministry, the most studious and painstaking in preparation, are among the most spiritual men. The Spirit of God does not obliterate reason and judgment, but rather renders them more keen, imparts to them more incisive force, so that the wise use of means to accomplish ends becomes a necessity. Men are born ignorant—their minds a blank, as Locke says—like a sheet of white paper. But they have instincts of reason and inherent capacities of soul which require material to act upon, and favourable conditions to bring into play. The soul is at first like a caged bird. It is formed for flight in the wide-spreading heavens. And it is education that breaks down the bars of the cage and lets it forth into the freedom for which it is created. Through the knowledge of the sciences it is able to scan all nature, in the heavens above, on the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth. It gives it a kind of omniscience. A liberal education gives a man the freedom of the universe of God.

In that most elevating and quickening life of John Howe written by Henry Rogers we learn how diligent he was in seeking intellectual fitness for the work that lay before him. Howe took his B.A. degree at Cambridge in 1648 and at Oxford in 1649. "He was at this time not quite nineteen years of age. Here he continued to prosecute his studies with unwearied industry. His extensive attainments, in conjunction with his exemplary piety, soon acquired him reputation in the university, and in due time he became Fellow of Magdalen College. On July 9, 1652, when only twenty years of age, he took the degree of M.A. By this time he had not only made great attainments in general knowledge, but had conversed closely with the heathen moralists and philosophers; and had perused many of the writings of the schoolmen, and several systems and common-places of the reformers. Above all, he had compiled for himself a system of theology from the sacred Scriptures alone; a system which, as he was afterwards heard to say, he had seldom seen occasion to alter." The preparation of those grand, massive Puritan preachers was a rich and royal preparation. One out of which has come monuments of learning that will last as long as the world with its teeming multitudes endures. They are truly imperishable mines of spiritual experience and sacred learning. Such, too, were our own beloved Scots worthies, that live on in everlasting youth in the works they have left us—not studied as they ought to be by us, their descendants—and in the charming biographies of John Howie, of Lochgoin and the "Memorable Characteristics of Mr. John Livingstone." They were all learned men.

Sabbath School Teacher

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS

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ELIJAH'S SUCCESSOR.

{ 2 Kings 2:
1-22.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.—Zech. iv. 6.

INTRODUCTORY.

Elisha, the successor of Elijah in the prophetic office, was the son of Shaphat, living at Abel-meholan, in the northern part of the Jordan valley. While living there, Elijah four times engaged in ploughing, and, according to God's command, anointed him as his successor. From that time onward he was with Elijah from whom he received instruction. For about sixty years he was God's messenger to the Jewish people, remaining steadfast in his devotion to God's service. Though not possessed of the same intrepid daring as his predecessor, he was no less earnest in his defence of God's truth. All men are not cast in the same mould. In God's service there is room for every diversity of gift, the one spirit of love to Him and consecration to His service being the common characteristic of them all.

I. Mourning the Departure of His Master.—Elisha had seen Elijah parted from him and carried to heaven. This translation according to Elijah's word was to be a sign to Elisha that his prayer for a double portion of his spirit had been granted. His emotion finds utterance in words of affection. "My father, my father!" Elisha had seen and known the great prophet in all relations, not only in his public and official capacity, but in his private life. It is reasonable to suppose that Elijah was a man of great tenderness and delicacy of feeling. It is a mistake to conclude that because a man strongly denounces what is evil he must necessarily be cruel and unfeeling; rather the opposite is the case. Strong natures feel strongly. Honest indignation is rightly measured by the love to which it answers. It is evident that Elisha was deeply attached to his master and was profoundly moved by his removal. He felt as if he had been bereaved. He had at the same time a keen perception of the exalted character of the departed prophet, for he adds: "The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." In those days the war chariot was the most formidable implement in battle. In his contention with the evil existing in his day and in defence of the truth he was the most powerful instrument of his time. He mourned his own and the nation's loss. In token of his sorrow he followed the common custom, "he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces." Having parted with his master, and mourned his loss, he turns to the duties of the office imposed upon him by Elijah's removal. He takes "the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back and stood by the bank of Jordan." He inherited more than the outward garment of the departed prophet. He had received a double portion of his spirit, the true qualifications for the office to which he had been called. With the mantle he smote the waters of the river as he had seen Elijah do, saying: "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" As in the previous case the waters were parted and the new prophet passed over the river dry-shod. In asking, where is the Lord God of Elijah, Elisha was not in any doubt or perplexity. It was not the cry of unbelief, but the confident expression of a vigorous faith, for without faith the working of miracles was impossible. His first miracle was a repetition of Elijah's last. The prophetic succession was unbroken.

II. With the Sons of the Prophets.—The fifty young men belonging to Jericho, who went to an eminence overlooking the Jordan valley, had seen the translation of Elijah, and awaited the return of Elisha. The parting of the waters was to them a visible sign that God was with him, and they recognized him as the divinely ordained successor of the prophetic teacher they had revered. They showed Elisha every mark of respect. They said that "the spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha," and saluted him most respectfully by bowing themselves to the ground before him. At the same time these young men asked Elisha's consent for them to search if perhaps the body of Elijah might somewhere be found. It would seem as if they thought that he might have been snatched up in the whirlwind, carried some distance and been dropped in a distant desert solitude. Elisha, knowing that such quest would be in vain, said: "Ye shall not find." They were importunate and at last Elisha was ashamed and gave his consent. To have withstood them longer might have looked as if he were afraid of the search. So that they might be convinced by actual investigation, he gives them permission. Fifty men were out for three days searching for the body of the departed prophet. They then returned to Jericho where Elisha awaited them and after telling that their search was fruitless, he replied: "Did I not say unto you, Go not?" This would remove all doubt from their minds and strengthen their conviction that Elisha was a divinely commissioned prophet.

III. A Miracle of Blessing.—While Elisha remained in Jericho the people came to him desiring a benefit for their city by his help. They approach him in a courteous manner, referring to the pleasant situation of Jericho, which after its long desolation had been rebuilt in the time of Ahab. The situation was pleasant, and the surrounding country good, but the water supply was impure, hurtful to health and vegetation. "The water is naught and the ground is barren" was their description. Elisha told them to bring him a vessel and put salt therein. He then went to the spring whence the water flowed and cast in the salt. It was not the small quantity of salt thrown in that effected the change. These things were only emblems of the divine power by which the miracle was accomplished. The salt represents healing and preserving power. It was through Elisha that God wrought the miracle, and it is in God's name he speaks, giving Him the glory. "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land." The healing of the water was permanent and even now the spring is called the "Fountain of Elisha." In the symbolic act by which Elisha in God's name healed the pestilential waters of Jericho may be seen the curative power for the world's miseries. Jericho was pleasantly situated but in what should have been a health-giving stream deadly influences lurked. So by sin is the river of this world's joys and happiness polluted. The world as God made it was beautiful, and much of that beauty still remains, but man's sin has spread death and desolation. The misery thus existing can only be cured by divine healing. God in His mercy and love has provided the means of restoration. The salt of God's revealed will for man's salvation has been cast into the stream of the world's misery and the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb flows freely for the healing of the nations.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

Good men are a country's best defence. Their death is deeply regretted by all who know them.

God raises up others to take the place of His servants whose life-work has ended.

Elisha needed more than Elijah's mantle to make him a prophet.

Candid and honest investigation always ends in arriving at truth.

Elisha was concerned in promoting the temporal well-being and prosperity as well as the moral and religious advancement of the people.