

more ; we may warn and exhort, we may succeed in awakening the slumbering conscience, and bring men to begin in earnest to seek the way of salvation, and, thank God, to find it.

And how easy it is to fill up our whole time with these things, so as to have none left for what is far more important, I feel safe in appealing to the experience of every one of my brethren. When we have done our Sunday duty,—gone through our frequent week-day services, teachers' meetings, and Bible classes in town, or our mission services far from home in the country,—catechised our schools and confirmation classes,—performed our regulated amount of pastoral visiting,—attended our committee-meetings,—given that time to social intercourse which society not unreasonably exacts, and which our own mental and bodily health no less inexorably demands ;—when we have done all this, (in addition to our *domestic* duties, which cannot be neglected,) how little time is left !—and how easy do we find it to persuade ourselves that none of that little can be spared for study,—that we are doing all we can, and can do no more,—that we are wholly absorbed in our Master's work—yes, and even more profitably (especially if we think that we are continually engaged in testifying the gospel of the grace of God from house to house) than we should be if we could find more time for even the highest studies !

But, after all, can we ever forget that, when we have done all this well and successfully, our work is only fairly begun ; that ours is principally if not exclusively a pastoral ministry ; that first and last we are pastors ;—and that, as the word itself teaches, we are to be mainly employed in feeding those who are already the sheep and lambs of Christ our God ?

Now all those functions of our ministry which I have enumerated, of whatever importance they may be, are not *feeding* the flock. To feed the flock is to provide spiritual nourishment suitable to the various and varying wants of its various members, such spiritual food as may enable them, if they take it in and assimilate it, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God, and to go on from strength to strength. This will include, it is true, the removal of difficulties and stumbling blocks, subjective and objective, the continual laying open of the man to himself, and pursuing the deceitful heart, through all the manifold windings and