

Church itself, this body of believers enlarged in number enriched in grace and abounding more and more in all good works.

Activities at Large.

His activities were not confined to his own congregation and community. Having an unusual evangelistic gift, he was frequently called on to conduct protracted services in other communities, and wherever he went the people recognized the voice of a true man of God and responded with professions of faith and renewed spiritual life. In the organized work of the Church at large also he always evinced an intelligent and hearty interest. He was faithful in his attendance at meetings of the Church courts, and was held in honor by all his brethren as a wise counsellor and an unobtrusive but active presbyter. His ripening attainments and growing influence were recognized in various ways years ago. In 1895 he received from King College the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In 1916 the Synod of Virginia, in session at Lexington, elected him Moderator. It is a sort of fixed tradition in the Synod of Virginia that the pastor of the First church, Danville, shall be a member of the Board of Trustees of Union Seminary. No church in our whole Assembly has ever shown a more enlightened and hearty interest in that cherished institution which has always been the main source of our Church's supply of ministers and missionaries than the First church in Danville. Dr. Martin was an honored and useful member of the Board of Directors there for twenty-four years. As soon as it could be arranged after Dr. Laird became your pastor, he was elected by the Synod a trustee of the Seminary, and for thirteen years rendered the Church at large most valuable service in that capacity. For the last seven years he was a member of our most important committee, the Executive Committee of the Board, succeeding in that position the beloved and lamented Dr. A. C. Hopkins. Every year the Board appoints one of its members to make an address to the graduating class. This is usually followed by some remarks to the graduates from the President of the Seminary on behalf of the faculty; but I remember that when Dr. Laird made this address it was so simple, so clear, so earnest, so evangelical, so adequate in every way that, when he sat down, instead of saying to the graduates the things I had intended to say, I told them that no words of mine could add anything to the spiritual force of the message to which they had just listened and that my one wish was that the impression of it might remain with them through life.

Humility and Modesty.

As to Dr. Laird's personality and character, some things have already been indicated in the foregoing sketch of his life and work. Only a man of wisdom, tact and patience, of sincerity, sympathy and consecration could have achieved such an influence and accomplished such results as those we have been reviewing. But there were certain outstanding qualities which it behooves us to mention more particularly. One of these was his humility. Humility is the rarest of the Christian graces. Chrysostom, the golden-tongued orator of the early Church, when asked what three traits marked the true Christian, replied: "First, humility; second, humility; third, humility." As Webb-Peploe says, "What God wants is men great enough to be small enough to be used." "True humility," says William Ellsworth Bryce, "is not always fully understood. To be humble does not mean that we are to

make door-mats of ourselves for people to wipe their feet on. It does not mean that we are to be inert, weak, flabby, unassertive and cowardly. True humility consists in a frank, manly, unpretending recognition of our true selves. It is not irreconcilable with fearlessness, aggressiveness, efficiency and loyalty to all great moral principles and causes. We know that humility and forceful efficiency can be reconciled, for we see them reconciled in the person of Christ. He was both humble and forceful. He was 'meek and lowly in spirit,' yet masterful and fearless. He was at once 'the Lamb of God' and 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah.' "

Dr. Laird had genuine humility. He really wore the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which in the sight of God is of great price. And this beautiful Christian modesty was one of the keys of his character and career. The gentleness of his heart and the purity of his nature showed in his face and gave to his whole appearance and address a singular benevolence and winsomeness. It was this moral refinement, this beauty of spirit, communicating itself even to his person and manner which gave him a distinction among the mass of men "like a braid of shining gold on a sleeve of hoddien gray."

Firmness and Strength.

Conjoined with the humility and gentleness of his nature which all who met him could see by a single glance at his face was another quality not so readily recognized, but not less real, viz., an adamant firmness wherever a principle was involved. Superficial people sometimes make a great mistake in their estimate of men of quiet and gentle manners. The late Senator William B. Allison, of Iowa, was a man of most gracious address. A political enemy of his spoke of him once in a disparaging way as pussy-footed, and said he could walk all the way from Iowa to Washington on the keys of a piano and never sound a note. A friend of the Senator's standing by, replied, "You left out one word in that statement. To make it correct you should have said that Senator Allison could walk all the way from Iowa to Washington on the keys of a piano and never sound a false note." The statement applies to Dr. Laird—so quiet, so gentle, yet so wise and so true. If people ever supposed that because there was no loudness and no bluster about him he was lacking in courage or firmness they had only to put him to the test in any matter of principle, and they speedily discovered that while he wore a velvet glove, there was a hand of steel within. He was indeed gentle, but he never was pliant where the truth was involved. He never compromised with falsehood or wrong. When he took his stand on a principle or on the clear teaching of God's word no power on earth could move him.

Like our Saviour, too, he had a capacity for hot indignation against everything false or mean or cruel.

Let no one suppose, therefore, that because he was gentle and patient, he was a weakling. Nothing could be further from the truth.

"His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, 'This was a man.' "

There was in him a rare combination of gentleness and strength. And it was this combination that won for him both your love and confidence, and gave him his remarkable hold on this community.

Living the Gospel.

All that we have said about his work is true. But what a man does depends upon what

he is. Action is character expressing itself, and in no other calling does the personality count for so much as in the ministry. That is why Phillips Brooks said that preaching is "truth through personality." When Woodrow Wilson was a professor at Princeton University, he said:

"When I hear some of the things which young men say to me by way of putting the arguments to themselves for going into the ministry, I think that they are talking of another profession. Their motive is to do something. You do not have to be anything in particular to be a lawyer. I have been a lawyer and I know. You do not have to be anything in particular, except a kind-hearted man, perhaps, to be a physician; you do not have to be anything, nor to undergo any strong spiritual change, in order to be a merchant. The only profession which consists in being something is the ministry of our Lord and Saviour—and it does not consist of anything else. It is manifested in other things, but it does not consist of anything else. And that conception of the ministry which rubs all the marks of it off and mixes him in the crowd so that you cannot pick him out, is a process of eliminating the ministry itself."

Your pastor was a conspicuous illustration of the truth of this statement. We have said that he was a man of talents and attainments, but it is far more to the purpose to say that he was a man of character—Christian character, through and through. The secret of his influence here, after all, was not that he was a man of gifts, but that he was a man of God. He not only preached the gospel; he lived it.

Translation.

About the middle of July Dr. Laird had taken Mrs. Laird and his daughter, Elizabeth, to Rockbridge and had then returned to Danville, expecting to rejoin them there in a few days for a stay of several weeks. On Monday, July 15th, he suffered an attack of acute indigestion and was taken to the General Hospital. He responded quickly to the treatment administered, and on Wednesday was up and dressed and sitting on the porch, expecting to be discharged on Friday. Thursday morning at 7:25 o'clock the night nurse, going off duty, saw him and talked with him, apparently refreshed by a good night's rest. Five minutes later the day nurse entered the room and found that he had passed away. "God's finger touched him and he slept"—without protracted pain, without prolonged wasting, without sadness of farewell—a veritable euthanasia—more like a translation than a dissolution. Remembering the manner of his life and the manner of his death, I think we must all feel that just one passage of Scripture described both: "Enoch walked with God and he was not, for God took him."

PRAYER.

By H. J. Gilkeson.

I have read with real pleasure your recent editorials on "Prayer," and think they are fine. I have one suggestion to make, which I hope will meet with your approval. It seems to me we do not go far enough; let us be more specific. We are told in 2 Kings 6:18, "Elisha prayed unto the Lord and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness, according to the word of Elisha."

Are the circumstances so different and the situation so changed today from that day that we should not expect similar results, or do we lack faith in God's answer to our prayer?