

A
FORTY THREE
YEAR PASTORATE
in a Country Church

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*Moderator of the General Assembly of the
 Presbyterian Church in the U. S.
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Pastorate of forty-three years at Union Church, Miss.

BY

REV. C. W. GRAFTON, D. D.

Union Church was organized in March, 1817 by the Presbytery of Mississippi, with 26 charter members, and it is now the third oldest Presbyterian organization in the Southwest. We have two churches that are older, Pine Ridge in Adams County, and Bethany in Amite. All three of these churches go back to the earliest pioneer days of Presbyterianism in the Southwest.

The history of Union Church indeed, however, goes back to 1811, when evangelists from the Synod of the Carolinas collected small congregations there. The earliest membership was composed mainly of immigrants from North Carolina and some from Tennessee. After the organization, a small store-house was built and a post office established, and around this small nucleus a little village has gradually been built up, which is known as Union Church.

This place is far out in the country, 25 miles from Brookhaven on the Illinois Central Railroad, 21 miles from Fayette on the Mississippi Valley Railroad, 45 miles from Natchez, 28 from Port Gibson, 32 from Hazlehurst, 20 from Meadville; so that anyone can see that this church is par excellence, a country church. The only way of access is by the great public roads. And until the auto cars came, a short time ago, we were reached only by horses and buggies and carriages.

We observe that in some quarters, churches in towns of 2,000 inhabitants claim the name of country churches; but Union Church Presbyterian Church is out and out a country church. It is indeed so far from the railroad and the roads in the winter have been so very bad,—the mud being sometimes knee-deep and rivers and creeks being impassable,—that people in the towns and cities would never think of turning their faces toward Union Church.

On one occasion, a young man was elected to be teacher of our school at Union Church. He left the railroad and came out 22 miles, where he spent the night. While there, as we suppose, he pondered over the long roads, and next morning he turned his horse around and went straight back, and we have never seen him since. Later on, a young lady was chosen to be our music-teacher and she came out with high hopes, but when she got settled, she too thought of the long distance and hope died out in her young heart and after two or three days she too left us, and we have seen her no more.

It is really and truly out of the way and far off in the country. But the birds have been singing here to admiring listeners for 100 years. The flowers and the grasses have been blooming and growing and the pure spring water has been flowing for nearly 100 years just below the church building, and the great forest trees have been lifting up their branches and have been waving in the winds, and nature has carried on its great process in silence and dignity.

The community was composed very largely of Scotch people. In the old records of Union Church we find 25 sets of Mc.'s: McArn, McArthur, McBride, McCall, McCallum, McCormick, McDonald, McLaurin, McLean, McMillan, McPherson, etc. These names establish the claim of the name, Scotch Settlement, which has long been applied to it. There have been

*Patrol who married my mother & father
April 6-1865*

Patrol's grand mother's family name. My married name is - Palmer's grand mother's family name - Smith - of

*Patrol's grand mother's family name - (on Mother's side)
who married Thomas Harris*

six different sets of Buies, 16 families of Catos, and a long list of other names. Listen to some of them: Alsworth, Baker, Barnes, Blue, Brown, Cameron, Clark, Currie, Fairly, Galbreath, Gilchrist, Knox, Newman, Patterson, Smylie, Torrey, Warren, Watson, Wilkinson, etc.

The period between 1820 and 1830 might be called the romance days of the old Scotch settlement. Everything was young and bright, fresh and full of life and vigor. The country abounded in game, and the streams in fish. The lowlands and the hills were covered with canebrakes. Farming was an easy matter at that day. Burn away the brakes, plant your corn and you were sure of a harvest.

This was the period of camp-meetings, when people would assemble from far and wide, camp out for ten or twelve days and hear the gospel from the best men in the church. The influence of these meetings for good can never be calculated. Through their agency a great many were born into the kingdom.

The first pastor of Union Church was Rev. William Montgomery. He began his pastorate in 1820 and closed in 1848. After him came Angus McCallum, John H. Smylie, Thomas Cleland and Samuel Montgomery. These served the church for just a few years each. The present pastor, Rev. C. W. Grafton, came to this church in June, 1872. After spending three months as a licentiate, he went back to the seminary and finished the senior course, returning the first of June, 1873. In July of this year he was ordained and installed pastor of Union Church.

This pastoral charge included Bensalem, a church nine miles distant, which was mainly an offshoot of the old church.

Now, if you will allow me to lay aside the stately third personal pronoun, and speak in the first person, saying I and me occasionally, during the balance of this discourse, it will make the speech easier. Indeed, the only

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value of this discourse is in the personal element, and the speaker is in the hand of his brethren.

I studied at Columbia Seminary in the class of T. L. Haman, McFarland, McKay, McAlpin, Chichester and some others. I was licensed by the Presbytery of Central Mississippi and from them received a letter of dismissal to the Presbytery of Mississippi.

During these years the Presbytery of Mississippi has been enlarged in some directions and narrowed in others; but Union Church has remained pretty nearly the geographical centre of the Presbytery, and the preacher on horseback has had access to the country all around.

THE PREACHING OF FORTY YEARS.

For forty-three years except the last three or four, the order of service on Sunday has been Sunday School at ten o'clock, preaching at eleven, then go home, eat dinner and spend the evening in private reading and family devotions. The Agricultural High School of the county, however, has come to Union Church recently, and since its advent we have had a second service at night. And then we had a mid-week service for a long time on Wednesday afternoons, and afterwards on Saturday afternoons. The above has been the regular, systematic order through all these years more or less, except on communion occasions. The staple of the preaching has been mainly doctrinal.

In 1873 Dr. Palmer visited Columbia Seminary and delivered a fine address to the student body. He spoke of Westminster Calvinism in the loftiest terms and some of us have never forgotten it. And for all these years at Union Church the fundamentals of Theology have been proclaimed. To wit: the doctrines of original sin, man's total depravity, God's sovereign will, eternal election of a multitude that no man can number, a definite atonement by Jesus Christ the Son of God for His people, irre-

sistible grace in the regeneration of the soul, and the final, certain perseverance of the saints. These are sometimes called dry bones of theology, but our people have not found it so. These doctrines go to the very bottom of human nature and set forth God in His beauty and glory, and country people love these great truths, and it would do you good to hear them discuss these great themes. In reading over the old records the young preacher was startled to see how a certain member was arraigned before the session on the charge of the "Arian Heresy." How could even the name "Arianism" have reached these country people? But here it was in black and white and the case was solemnly adjudicated by these stern old Scotch elders.

Calvinism presents God as standing before the sinner, demanding his surrender and offering infinite mercy. These truths make up the conquering gospel. Along with the doctrinal, following Paul's example, we have had the practical. And the great themes of Sabbath observance and the training of children, the religious home, the Abrahamic covenant, the duty of prayer, and generally all the commandments of the Decalogue as the rule of life, have been set forth.

And then, too, at stated times, the ordinance of baptism and the Lord's Supper, have furnished the finest field for thought and devotion.

Along with all these, the biographical has had its due share of notice. Adam and Eve, and Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, Moses and Aaron and Miriam and Joshua. Then in later history, John Wesley, George Whitefield, David Livingstone and others have all claimed attention from a body of eager listeners.

It might seem that in a long pastorate a preacher would find a dearth of themes; but the Bible can never be exhausted, and today the pastures are just as green and the topic

are just as numerous and hearers are just as attentive as they were forty years ago. The farther one goes into the King's garden, the more he sees and wants to see. The Scripture is a deep well and the country preacher has never gotten to the bottom of it.

Then as to the style of preaching. Dr. Girardeau once told a body of students never to be hampered by rules of rhetoric. Let rules teach you but never bind you. George Whitefield acted according to this rule. On good authority, he is reported to have had a voice that could be heard distinctly at times nearly a mile. So the country preacher has it pretty nearly his own way about this matter. He has always preached too, as long as he wanted to. A sermonette has never been tolerated in our country pulpit. Our people would be astonished to see their preacher stop at 25 or 30 minutes. Forty minutes is standard length, sometimes fifty, sometimes an hour. Our bright young girls go off now and then and attend preaching in the cities. They come back and sometimes shrug their shoulders at the long sermons, but the country preacher goes right straight ahead.

On account of the perfect regularity of the preaching services and the pure gospel, which we claim without any hesitation has permeated them all, we have never felt the need of so-called evangelistic services. We do not discount these indeed, but we have never felt their need. With perfect regularity our children at a suitable age have always come forward to the communion table with scarcely an exception. We have laid the greatest stress on the idea that covenant children have a right to claim all the promises given to their fathers, and we invite them to come to the communion table and they always come. Once or twice in forty-three years we have had services lasting five or six days, which was regarded as remarkable. On

our summer communion occasions a visiting brother generally comes in and the services last three or four days. The people always look forward to these; and these, the regular services of the sanctuary, have yielded all the fruit we could expect.

CHURCH MUSIC.

The singing has always been congregational, and the old Presbyterian Psalmodist has furnished us the tunes. And you ought to hear an old country congregation singing. Give out the hymn: "How firm a foundation," and the leader will always sing it to "Protection." Listen and you will never fail to hear Uxbridge, Rockingham, Arlington, Golden Hill, Nettleton, etc.

And we have been singularly free from that dreadful affliction which some preachers encounter—trouble with the choir; jealousy among the musicians. The preacher's wife first, and then the preacher's girls, have for 35 years led the music, accompanied by an old Mason and Hamlin organ. For the first ten years a ruling elder with a peerless voice, raised the tunes and carried the music. As said above, the singing has been congregational all along. On time to the minute, the preacher goes into the pulpit and the organist for 35 years has never been from her place behind time one minute. We have heard sometimes of churches being rent asunder and peace being entirely destroyed by contentions about the music. We have never had such in our old country church.

PASTORAL WORK AT UNION CHURCH FOR FORTY-THREE YEARS.

The pastoral work has been very laborious. Including Bensalem, the sister church, our congregation stretches over twenty miles in length, and about the same in breadth, 400 square miles. Around the church the people are more thickly settled, and they can always

come to church and Sunday School. And a good deal of the pastoral work can be done by walking around from house to house. But in the outlying sections of the congregation this has been impossible. Some of our members rarely ever get to church and they cannot have the benefit of the Sunday School and the prayer service. And when the preacher goes to see them, it's a long, hard day's work; if the roads happen to be bad, especially hard. Some of the trips the country preacher has taken, make one tired to think about. Three fine horses and two or three buggies have been worn out in the service and I am now looking around for the horse that will probably last till sunset comes.

(Since the above was written for the General Assembly, the school boys and girls of the Union Church High School, of which I was principal for ten years, as will be explained further on, united and bought for their teacher, a Ford touring car. At our summer communion occasion this year, a bright young lawyer from a neighboring town, one of our former schoolboys, made a touching address to the congregation, presenting the car as an expression of their tender regard.)

A visit to quite a number of our families cannot be made oftener than once a year, but a pastoral visit in the country means more than it does in the cities and towns. In the big cities, I suppose, the preacher spends his mornings in the study and walks out in the afternoon and calls on his flock and goes to see four or five and sometimes just leaves a card. But not so in the country. You send word beforehand that you are coming such and such a day, and when that day comes, rain or shine, you start early in the morning. You get to the house by and by and find them all looking for you, and they come out to the gate to meet you. Your horse is put away and fed; after

a little while, if it is summer time, they cut the big melon or bring out the peaches and figs. By and by the bell rings in the dining room and lo, dinner is ready.

Solomon says, "Put a knife to thy throat when thou sittest at the table of kings." He says again, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." But in these old country homes you have the ox and love too, besides the clean herbs of the field. If you ever felt like eating in all your life, now is your chance. But be sure you don't eat too much. Many ridiculous stories we could tell of persons who forgot Solomon's injunction. Two hours after dinner comes the ice cream, and again you minister to the outward man, for they have sent for this occasion out to the railroad for ice.

At last the Bible is brought out and now preacher, here again is your chance. You may not see some of these people again in twelve months. Give meat to parents, and pure milk of the Word for the little ones. Speak tenderly and earnestly and then in prayer remember all three generations that are here present, father and son and son's sons and daughters. Sow seed for eternity.

The preacher naturally forms a line of habits. The first Saturday evening in January he goes to the Baker home, the first of February to the Buie home; Saturday before communion occasion to the Currie home, and so on and on throughout the year. Changes occur in the program of course, for death comes and homes are broken up. These long pastoral rides are formidable indeed. To wit: to ride 20 miles on horseback or in a buggy to see one of your people and back again the same day, twenty-five miles to see another family and back again the next day; and this repeated again and again. Journeys of 15 miles a day are too numerous to mention.

One recompense though, is the pure air and the bright sunshine, and the beautiful woods and the flowing streams and the long trip with your boy or your girl. While laborious, some of these pastoral trips have been inexpressibly sweet and carry memories that can never die.

A missionary in distant China sits down in his home with his little boys and tells them of the long trips he used to take with his father in Mississippi, and how he talked of Bismarck and Napoleon and made the miles seem short as he drew pictures of the future. And the girl now grown to womanhood, can never forget the long rides to the railroad, the dinner by the roadside, the deep creeks and scary-looking bogs, the outpouring of girlish confidence and the warm-hearted friends met on the way.

Another recompense is in carrying the gospel personally to men. "Tell me about them big arms!" This was the language of a dying Scotchman as the pastor entered the room. The old man had heard the preacher talk sometime before about the God of Jeshurun, and underneath the everlasting arms, and like a babe in early childhood, he now felt the need of the strong arms.

"Did you ever leave the boys, Captain?" This was spoken to a Confederate soldier who had for long years been a soldier of the cross, but his faith was clouded. The preacher knew him to be a brave captain in the army and led him to remember that while in the trenches or on the march or in the grim day of battle, he had never left the boys that he carried away from home. And thus he was led to see that Jesus the great captain would never leave him.

Another great exaction on the country preacher is the ministry at burials. After staying 30 or 40 years in a place one begins to pay the

price of a long pastorate. For at the burial of their dead, surrounding churches and neighborhoods all want him." Being Methodist or Baptist doesn't count anything. You get to the church or grounds and the head of the family says, "We have nothing at all against our own preacher, but you have known our boy all his life, and we wanted you with us." And the young preachers, Methodist and Baptist alike, understand the situation and deferentially and gracefully give way to him.

In the general neighborhood of Union Church, within a radius of 20 miles, there are as many as 20 different churches and burying grounds which have called on the Presbyterian pastor. And when it is at all possible, he must answer these calls. And again, a burial in the country is a little different from what it is in the city or town. Not a simple burial service, but a sermon is wanted. You may be burying a bad man, one that has been killed in a wild melee. You have a house crowded from one end to the other and they wonder what will the preacher say. But don't be disturbed about that. The preacher is not hampered in any way and does not feel called on to laud the dead and foster the spiritual pride of survivors in this sad hour. The preacher is backed up by Calvinistic theology and he takes a text like this: The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. And he preaches about a Sovereign God Who is just, but tender and boundless in love. The sermon will create no false hopes, but all feel bowed and subdued and consoled by the fact that God reigns and not man.

You are called on to bury all ages from gray hairs to the infant of days and no sweeter pleasures can a man have, than to tell about the chain with its broken links restored again in heaven. And no occasion calls forth deeper gratitude or more strongly cements the

pastoral tie than the scenes around the open grave.

The newspapers bring obituaries and marriages in close connection. And just as saddening and tender as is the funeral occasion to the pastor, so the marriage ceremony strikes another chord in the spirit of tenderness. And the preacher again pays the price of a long pastorate. For the people of his flock scatter and go to cities and towns. So now and then a delicate call comes to him asking him to come and perform the marriage ceremony and he goes all the way to Vicksburg, Fayette and Canton and old Concord, over long distances, to join the loving hands of man and woman in holy wedlock. Pretty soon the preacher is astonished to find that the girl who stands before him, of the bridal couple, is the child of parents whom he joined in wedlock twenty-five years before and in the romance of the hour, he tries to put them in the very same sacred spot where her own father and mother stood long years ago. Verily, time flies by on rapid, golden wing and the generations stand close together in pastoral experience.

Another exaction is attending the church courts, and a preacher must attend these courts or forever stand in the way of his own usefulness. He must go to the meetings of Presbytery. Now and then to do this, he must leave his wife in bed or a sick child and take the long trip to the railroad and trust in God to keep them safe and sound during his absence. The country preacher is much like a pioneer. His horse is his faithful friend. The Presbytery is to meet on Thursday at one side of the Presbytery. He leaves home on Monday, travels all day Tuesday and Wednesday over the long road. He meets Dr. Caldwell and Oberschmidt on the road, and some others join them next day, and what a happy meeting for dusty travelers! On the way a stranger says:

"Which way are you gentlemen going?" "To Calvary Church in Smith County." And on, the happy travelers wend their way. They draw up to the church, a body of tired men and horses. But their stay with those good people, the fine sermons that are preached, the tender communion occasion, the new faces of young men and women that kindle with brightness when they meet you, the preaching in the church and then in the grove on Sunday, pay you for the long ride. Twenty years afterward you meet some of the boys and girls who heard you on that occasion. A seminary student at Clarksville will say, "I heard you in the grove that day, and I remember your text." You start back home on Monday morning, preach again on the way home where you spend the night, and after being gone over a week you get back and you discover that you have had a trip that will never be forgotten.

Another painful but fruitful exercise of pastoral work is in the line of church discipline. This important means of grace has well-nigh died out of the church at large. But in the old country church it has been a most important business. From Union Church to Natchez it is forty-five miles and it was always a great occasion when the farmer yoked up his oxen and started to market with a whole week before him for going and returning. Some of the old Scotch were not averse to strong drink, and coming back with a jug of Scotch whiskey their animal spirits would be stirred on the way and their home-coming would be loudly advertised. But such an one would unfailingly be brought before his brethren in the church and he would be certain of a reprimand and would probably be excommunicated for awhile. The old records of Union Church abound in illustrations of the faithful dealings of the elders with their brethren. Let a man be overtaken in a fault such as violating the

Sabbath Day or taking God's name in vain, or becoming intoxicated, and he was certain of discipline by the church. And this faithful attitude of the ruling elders doubtless saved many an erring brother.

THE PASTOR IN THE SCHOOLROOM.

A minister is ordained to preach the gospel and he must give it unremitting care and attention, but sometimes it seems necessary for the preacher to put his hands to some other sort of work. Paul the apostle worked at tent-making, and our pioneer forefathers did not hesitate to take the plow and the axe and go to tilling the soil, and many very faithful men have done their very best work, perhaps, in the school room. The time came during the present pastorate at Union Church when the call was very clear for the preacher to go into the school work at Union Church, and without ever missing an appointment from pulpit service, he followed for ten years the school work very closely. There had been for many years a school of some sort in the little village but there was need for a larger. So we got possession of an old storehouse, large enough for the main hall of a school building and we added to it one room after another till we had a large school building with seven fine recitation rooms. In 1891 Dr. Thomas R. Markham came up from New Orleans and delivered an address to our school and preached commencement sermon. When he went back home he advertised our work in three or four successive issues of the "Southwestern Presbyterian." This was a pleasing recognition of the work done in the old country church.

In those consecrated rooms mentioned above, we had a great many fine boys and girls. They began to come in to us from a distance till one year we had all told, about 150 pupils. Here some of our best work was done. The staple teaching was Latin, Greek, Mathematics

and English. Such items as Spelling, Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, Geography, History, Physiology, Civil Government, were carried on in the intermediate department. But the main staple drill was in the four studies. The preacher was an alumnus of the State University, and at different times had associated with him in the school room, four or five faithful men and excellent young women. We used Dr. Shearer's famous Syllabus of Bible History, with religious service regularly, twice a day, morning and evening. We began the day with devotion and closed it with devotion. Here for ten long years, boys and girls were urged to do everything in Jesus' name: to sweep the floors, make the fires, to get the multiplication table, to study theorems and syllogisms, and to do all other work in the King's name and for God's glory. The preacher-teacher told the boys and girls of three kinds of work; the work of a slave done through fear of punishment; the work of the hireling for the money that was in it, and the work of a child done for the love of father and mother. He urged them to work from the loftiest motive, love to God. Such work as this was worthy of an angel's talent. It was a combination of the teacher and the pastor in the closest kind of contact with young minds. The people of the community never made any objection to this arrangement. They were all too glad to have their boys and girls under this kind of discipline and instruction. During this period about 400 boys and girls passed through our training school and they are scattered today all over the land. The school got so large that by and by the preacher had to choose definitely between the pulpit and the school room. And as there were two young men who were ready to take up the school work, the preacher went back to the undivided labors of the pulpit and turned the school over to these young men.

I mention all this for the encouragement of brethren who may be similarly situated. It was thought at first that one year in school business would ruin the preacher; that the first time a boy or girl was disciplined after Solomon's style, a storm would be raised against him, but it did not prove so. It is beautiful to think how the fathers and mothers of that old community sustained their preacher in the arduous trials and labors of a teacher. So if God calls any young man to take part in similar business, let him not be afraid. God will be with him if he has called him to that work. "My grace is sufficient for Thee" sustained Paul while groaning under the thorn. Grace divine will sustain any one of God's people anywhere and at any time when in the line of duty. It is pleasing to note that on the foundation of the work which was laid by the preacher and his helpers on educational lines at Union Church, Jefferson County, in the last four years has built up a fine Agricultural school. Three large, commodious buildings on a beautiful tract of land, within calling distance of the manse and the church, now stand as monuments of the work of long years. And here large numbers of the young people of Jefferson County gather from year to year.

A leader of men once said that if the mountain would not come to Mohammed, Mohammed would go to the mountain. In the Union Church case, the preacher would not, could not, go out to the mountain, but God has brought the mountain to his very doors and week after week and Sabbath after Sabbath, it is a matter of unspeakable delight for the preacher to look into the eyes of so many young people and speak of the things that will never fail.

During all this period of forty years the country preacher has been a house builder. When his little children began to cry in the

first house where he boarded, the home of one of his neighbors, he saw that a manse must be built. Through his agency a neat little home was built, which is now known among us as the Presbyterian manse. Next came the school buildings, humble and modest, but all-sufficient for our purpose. Among those rooms was one known as the Latin room, where discipline was enforced and young offenders atoned for their wrong doing. It was very ominous in those days for a boy to hear the words, "Please walk into the Latin room."

After the school buildings came two boarding houses, one for boys and one for girls; and all this without a dollar of appropriation from state or county, or one dollar from the millionaires of the land, or one dollar of endowment. One patron would bring boards, one lumber, one brick, one would do hauling, etc. And these buildings all stand there now to show for themselves, representing the time, the soul, the heart, the love of the country preacher.

PASTORAL SUPPORT.

This theme is one that brings wrinkles of care to many of our ministers, young and old. But it is pleasing to say that no pressure of want or pinch of need or forebodings of coming need have ever brought a shadow of distress upon the heart of the country preacher. And that, too, when the salary paid would be very meagre. For many years, when the session of Union Church meets to make out reports for Presbytery, when responding to the question concerning the payment of pastor's salary, they always say, "Paid in full," if the amount reaches \$600. We have, indeed, a manse free of charge, and the amount above mentioned is supplemented in a variety of ways. Some will send in a load of hay, and during all the winter now passed, the preach-

er's table has been supplied with meat which comes in through the kindness of neighbors. A neighboring minister was astonished years ago when he found out how small a salary was paid at Union Church. He did not know indeed, that one tenth of that amount went into the Lord's treasury and that all expenses of living were met by nine-tenths of the amount received. The ease of living in the country is readily explained. Your wife and children don't dress in the height of fashion. Seal-skin coats and other costly fabrics and thirty-dollar hats are luxuries never indulged in. The country preacher's wife and girls learn to gauge their wants by the amount of cash on hand. Then they never expect the annual trip to watering places with the outlay of two or three hundred dollars. And the foods upon the preacher's table are generally raised at home as far as possible.

We do buy such things as sugar and flour, but nearly everything else is raised at home. Such things as tobacco and its products are unknown among us. For many years the preacher has not bought one pound of coffee for family use. There are no moving pictures to steal away your money every night, and no drinking fountains to empty your pocket day by day. On the other hand, pay 50c and you get a cord rick of wood. There is no expense for water or electric lights. You get water out of your own good well and cistern and farther still, servant hire and laundry expenses are cheap out in the country. Now as a matter of fact, one man may receive \$5,000 per annum, may spend it all and be in debt at the end of the year, while another man may receive less than \$1,000, give one-tenth of it to the Lord's kingdom and have an abundance of all things needed. It all depends on discipline and economy. In spite of the things that the country preacher and his family have not seen nor

heard, in spite of many social functions of which he and his family are necessarily deprived, we have lived well through all these years. The barrel of meal has never wasted and the cruse of oil has never failed. We have had more by a great deal than tens of thousands of preachers that by nature are better than we.

When children began to grow up and their tender voices were heard out under the shade trees and elsewhere, the question of education would have loomed up as a dark shadow if we had allowed it to do so. A distinguished professor, a brother-in-law indeed, visited us at Union Church once and he put the question: "What will you do when these children grow up and have to go to college?" The question however, caused no anxiety. As surely as God gave us seven children we were sure that God would provide for them. And the richest promises of God were fulfilled. Our girls received as good an education in our high school at Union Church as they could have received in most of the girls' colleges of the land. Under the blessed tuition of the Holy Spirit one boy and one girl were carried up to the Father's house upon the threshold of young manhood and young womanhood. When the time came a kind friend from Clarksville, Miss Addie Wilson, visited our home and was impressed with our only remaining boy. She invited him to come to their home at Clarksville, and the question of his education was settled. He took a seminary course, was ordained as a foreign evangelist, and is now one of our missionaries at Haichow, China.

The country preacher is astonished at times when he hears of a young preacher in a big town receiving a thousand dollars and a manse free, who closes the year in debt and complains that he is not receiving enough. The country preacher does not understand it. Again we

have heard old preachers talk about the time coming on when the dead line will be reached and they will be ostracized or turned out like old horses to graze. The preacher at Union Church has never had such forebodings. Again still, a prominent church becomes vacant and the country preacher is astonished to hear that there were thirty or forty applicants for the place. The country preacher has never applied for a place or position anywhere. He has always felt that the Lord brought him to the country and if the Lord wanted him out of the country he would bring him out. If the Lord wanted him to fill a pulpit in a big city he would know how to land him there. And he has never had time nor inclination to leave the men and women and boys and girls of the old country church to go out and hunt for richer fields.

There is enough there for him to do and the responsibilities and burdens of the country church are heavy enough for him to bear. And to do this he needs all the help God gives him. Sometimes a comparison has been made between what the church does for its minister and what the federal government does for its officers in the army and navy. But the country preacher never thinks of instituting such comparisons, remembering that the kingdoms of this world are one thing, and the kingdom of Christ is a different thing. A young man gives himself to Christ for the holy ministry. As a faithful elder brother, Jesus sees that our traveling expenses are paid until sunset comes and the fullness of the reward comes in the sunset land. I say all these things to encourage any young man who has a dread of going to the country. Sure enough there is a feeling of loneliness, but take your girl along with you and cultivate the flowers and roses. Yea, plant some cabbage and potatoes too. Listen to the sweetest songs of birds that carol. Go

around among men and women and boys and girls. Point them to the higher life and look forward. Always and everywhere Abraham's answer to Isaac will be true. Jehovah Jireh.

You may long indeed sometimes for the social life of the college, the seminary, the city, the town, but just be faithful and stand to your post and in a very few years you will have your own circle around you in the rising boys and girls of the church. You simply form your own society; make your own fire by which you warm yourself in future years.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF FORTY-THREE YEARS.

As dark days interblend in the long year, so in the long pastorate we have had many bright days and many seasons of darkness. During the early part of this pastorate, we were living in what was known as the "Reconstruction period." As a result of political agitation the negro race was for awhile dominant. It was a moral certainty, however, that this state of things would not be tolerated long. But it was quite embarrassing for the preacher to take his place as adviser during those distressing days. Passing on, however, to another period, our whole land was burdened with financial depression. For some reason the price of cotton was very low. It went down to four or five cents a pound. It did not pay for the cost of production and the young men began to leave the country. Everywhere one heard of mortgages and liens and deeds of trust on the land. The older men of the community could not adjust themselves to new labor conditions. There was a long period of financial depression. We can see now how the young men of the land could have changed their modes and made farming pay. But at the time there seemed to be no way out of the troubles of the country. And so many lands were given up to creditors.

This was all bad enough. But ten years ago the boll-weevil struck the country and this brought absolute ruin to the cotton industry. The finest farms throughout the land were entirely abandoned. The negro laborers left the country by car loads and the white people offered no objection to it. They felt that they could not offer our colored friends anything and they did not try to keep them. Cotton gins, cotton lands were given up. Banks all over the country were ruined, failing completely, and what money the farmers had in them was almost entirely lost. The great boll-weevil pest seemed to complete the stroke of disaster and again the young blood and talent of the land left us. The whole country is now recuperating indeed, and the people are gradually adapting themselves to the new conditions; but from the first days of disaster to the last, the old country church lost over a hundred families. It seemed indeed at one time as if Union Church would share the fate of the ruined banks and the broken farms. But the church and the school are great conservators and the old country church slowly and surely is recuperating and girding itself we hope for richer and mellow days to come. It is pleasing to note that during all this period the old church has been faithful in answering the calls of benevolence. And we reported this year something over \$200 to foreign missions and \$300 to other causes. So we see that the shadows are relieved by the light of God's grace.

Speaking of shadows, we note still farther, that when the preacher came to Union Church he brought as his companion, the youngest daughter of an old Presbyterian preacher, Rev. D. G. Doak. And the first dark shadow fell on the preacher's home when a long procession of mourning friends carried her remains to our cemetery. Two precious young flowers had already been transplanted to the King's garden

from our home, and five orphan children, bowed down with the first great grief of childhood, stood with their father at the open grave where wife and mother was laid away. Ten years afterward two of that group, one a girl just on the threshold of young womanhood, the other a boy in the first flush of young manhood, heard the Master's call and two more graves were dug for the pastor's family in the cemetery.

(In the meantime, after the father of these children had for six years served as father and mother, pastor and preacher and teacher, five offices combined in one man, God in his providence brought to the manse another young woman clothed in bridal robes, Mrs. Kate Wharton Grafton, who tenderly nursed his children to the King's gates and has been a great help in carrying on the work of the church and enlarging the contributions.)

In addition to all this, we have buried during this pastoral period, thirteen Ruling Elders, and all that band of old men and women that greeted the young pastor when he came forty-three years ago. Rev. D. A. Planck once came from Port Gibson to help us in a meeting. He remarked to some one that he never saw so many venerable men and women with their gray hair and faces. There is not one of these left behind. The pastor has buried a whole generation, and the congregation upon which he now looks Sabbath after Sabbath, consists very largely of the grandchildren of that old set of men and women. As he walks around and sees the bright faces of our young people, he is led every now and then to ask one of them if he remembers his grandfather, and the boy or girl will go away and say, "The preacher knows more about my grandfather than I know myself." This gives a preacher a great hold on a boy. "If you knew what sort of a man your great grandfather was, you

Daughter of Earl Brewer married my wife Julia Harris

would certainly feel inspired to rally up and do better than you are doing." Last summer at Union Church on a political platform, the preacher introduced the governor of the State. He had copied from the yellow leaves of the first volume of the old records the act of the session in receiving a little girl named Mary McDougald. He went on to say that Mary McDougald married another one of the Mc family and left the old neighborhood and went up into the northern part of the State, carrying her religion and her church letter and her husband with her. She lived to a great age, and when she died she left behind her 121 children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, all of whom, with scarcely an exception, were members of the visible kingdom; and this venerable woman dying at the age of nearly 100 years, was the grandmother of the Honorable Earl Brewer, governor of the State of Mississippi, here on the platform today. To this introduction the governor feelingly responded. He is today a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church, which his ancestors loved so well. The preacher indeed, as he passes through all the country, seems to be walking in the midst of graveyards. We should not, indeed, class this among the shadows of a country church. For all these sacred cemeteries are lighted up with the hope that streams from the promise of God as he says, "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you."

TO BALANCE THE SHADOWS, BEHOLD THE LIGHTS.

Do you wonder how it is that an old country church that has suffered so much from death and removals could possibly survive? Now and then one asks that question and the answer is very easy. Our old country church grows from within. During all these years the move-

ment has always been outwards and scarcely a family has moved in our midst. Union Church is strictly an ecclesiastical Endogen. To wit: John McArn married Lizzie Wilkinson and they had twelve children and they are all members of Union Church. Peter Wilkinson married Mary Faris, and they have ten children and they are all members of Union Church except one that we gave to a Baptist brother. J. E. Lamb married Lenora Gillis and had thirteen children. Jim Currie married Mary Warnock and had eleven. H. J. Fairley married Jane Buckles and had thirteen children. John Daniel Blue married Eliza McLean and had eleven children. At a glance one can see that these six families with 60 or 70 children would go a long way toward keeping things lively in a community.

In all these families there is scarcely a bad one in the whole lot. None of them will ever go to the poorhouse. Two or three candidates for the ministry, some bright young doctors, some teachers, merchants, farmers, etc., all show the good blood that is back of them. The question has been discussed a great deal as to how to keep a country church alive. There is really but one answer: Contrive a way to keep the young farmers at home and let them raise corn and peas and cattle and children and the country church will be saved. If some wise man could put this suggestion into practice, he would be the greatest benefactor of the church at large.

It is personally gratifying to note the great respect which everybody has for the country preacher. In the circle in which he moves, he has received all the honor and deference which a preacher could possibly expect. They call on him to lay corner stones and dedicate school buildings and churches and preach com-

mencement sermons for neighboring schools. By common consent he has been made the conductor and manager on the political platform when the annual gatherings come around and speakers from far and wide come together to discuss the issues. And he opens these meetings by reading some verses from God's word and leading the people in prayer to God. In this way the gold men and the silver men and the tariff men and all other shades of political belief are brought to think of the common ground upon which they can all stand, under the sweet assurance that they have one Father above.

In concluding this article, it is exceedingly precious to look forward to the everlasting hills. A great many of God's redeemed ones from our own nooks and corners are dwelling on those heavenly slopes where pastures of living green await all the hosts. It cannot be a long time till this earthly pastorate shall come to an end. The preacher is now living somewhat in the days of retrospection. The friends of the earlier days have all gone and his intimate associates are now fresh from the dew of youth.

The question might be asked, "Has the preacher done well? Has he done his best?" To this question no one knows better his own imperfection, failures, sins, than the preacher does himself. But Moses, the man of God, went up to the top of Nebo. He looked all around him on the land of the future and upon his grandchildren encamped in the plain and he realized that he himself was passing on to the Father's house, a sinner saved by grace; and he passed away with his face toward the promised land.

So, in the coming sunset, as another sinner redeemed by sovereign love, with the world behind him and the future ahead, without a

regret or a sigh, the country preacher will pass
on to a better country.

On all those wide extended plains,
Shines one eternal day;
There God the Son forever reigns,
And scatters night away.

No chilling winds nor poisonous breath
Can reach that healthful shore;
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death
Are felt and feared no more.