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The Perfume of the Pastor: His Sympathy

By MALCOLM JAMES MacLEOD

I AM being reminded of this almost every day by the tributes I hear paid to the memory of my lamented predecessor, Donald Sage Mackay. I never had the pleasure of hearing or seeing Dr. Mackay, but all seem to agree that he was not a wonderful preacher. What won and held his great congregation was the superb sympathy of the man. He had such a big, tender, human heart. He felt.

As a dear friend was telling me only yesterday; she had lost her sister and the Doctor at the time happened to be up in Maine on his summer vacation—and a sick man. But he came down to the funeral unexpectedly, although the deceased had not been a member of his Church. And when the sister said to him, "Doctor, why did you come so far?" "Because," he answered, "I heard you wished that I was here, and when I knew that I wished it too."

And is not that the very key to sympathy—to put one's self in the other's place? Whoso does this will always feel. Sympathy can never be aristocratic. No man can be exclusive and compassionate. Sympathy is essentially considerate and thoughtful. Wordsworth says of Milton, "Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart." But Milton we know was by nature cold, solitary, masterful, austere.

Sympathy and compassion mean the same thing, "to feel with," the one being Latin, the other Greek. I can feel for a brother-in-distress at a distance, but I cannot fully feel with him until I get close by and hear his sobs. Then his trouble becomes my trouble too and I am a co-sufferer. As Madame du Chatelet says, "I have a pain in my sister's side."

"Rejoice with those that do rejoice and weep with those that weep." Not weep for. Weep with. Pity is weeping for, but many there are who dislike being pitied. Pity has been known even to reprove. Pity is a little apt to carry with it a gentle reminder that possibly after all it may be one's own fault. Jesus did not weep for Mary and Martha. He wept with them. He did not stand aloof and say, "How sorry I am for you!" He stood by the grave and said, "I am sorry with you."

When the little child in the street saw a bereaved husband following the casket of a loved one to the grave his heart was touched, and he went up to the weeping man, and slipped his hand into his, and walked along without saying a word. That was true sympathy.

When Walt Whitman writes of the horrors of the hospitals at the time of our Civil War, when he tells us of one poor fellow about to undergo an operation, and as there were no opiates, saying to the poet, "Would you mind sitting by and holding my hand?" He takes the lad's hand and watches the cold beads of perspiration break out on the brow, and the wrenches of pain, and says Whitman, "Every cut of the knife cut me too." That also was true sympathy.

And when that merchant discovered just recently that one of

his clerks was embezzling, he called him into his private office and said, "Charlie, why did you do this?" The young man was crushed with a sense of unutterable shame, and putting his head down on the desk he burst into tears. The merchant saw the tender spot and felt he must tip toe tenderly. "He must not break the bruised reed." Convinced that there was good stuff left, he put his arms about him at last, and said in the dusk of the twilight, "Charlie, let us kneel and ask God to forgive us." "Us!" That was the grace, was it not, in its perfect expression? To sympathize with men who are terribly tempted! What a delightful and delicate and gracious art!

But sympathy is not only the minister of sorrow. She is also the blessed messenger of joy. She is a beautiful angel with two wings. Clip either and her glory is shorn.

We are not only to weep with those who weep; we are to rejoice with those who rejoice. We are not only to sob with men in their sorrows; we are to laugh with them in their laughter, which is a more intricate and a much more difficult and subtle thing. It is not easy to see another go forward when we cannot. Not easy to say to one's competitor, "God prosper you brother, there is room for us both."

But it is the mind of the Master. Where real sympathy is jealousy cannot linger. Jealousy is throwing impediments in the path of your rival. Sympathy is rolling away the stones.

You, colleague in the pulpit, you are meeting with success in your stewardship. I share the holy joy with you. You, young Christian, the beat of a great victory is in your heart. My heart is also beating. There is a keen and sensitive partnership. You, seeker of souls, you have won a wanderer home, and you are jubilant with an unearthly delight. I, too, am jubilant. The joy of leading a soul to Jesus is like the joy of a mother when God gives her a child. And is not this the sweetest strain in heaven's music: "Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost." "With me!"

Now this is the charm and glory of Jesus. Many are willing to rest his supremacy on the royalty of his concern for others. Such a superb unselfishness! It is the sympathy of the man that wins my heart. He made the sorrow of the world his own. "In all your affliction he is afflicted." And its joy too! "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full."

And it is the superlative power of the pastor. It is the very perfume of the man. It steals so insidiously and so sweetly into every niche of his ministry. It blossoms like the seed of the honeysuckle into a most beautiful and fragrant creeper. There is a deep, delicate redolence about the curate of souls who can feel with his flock, that is most compelling. The very witchery of true pastoral success is in getting an insight into other people's joys and sorrows, and being able to understand them and interpret them and share them.

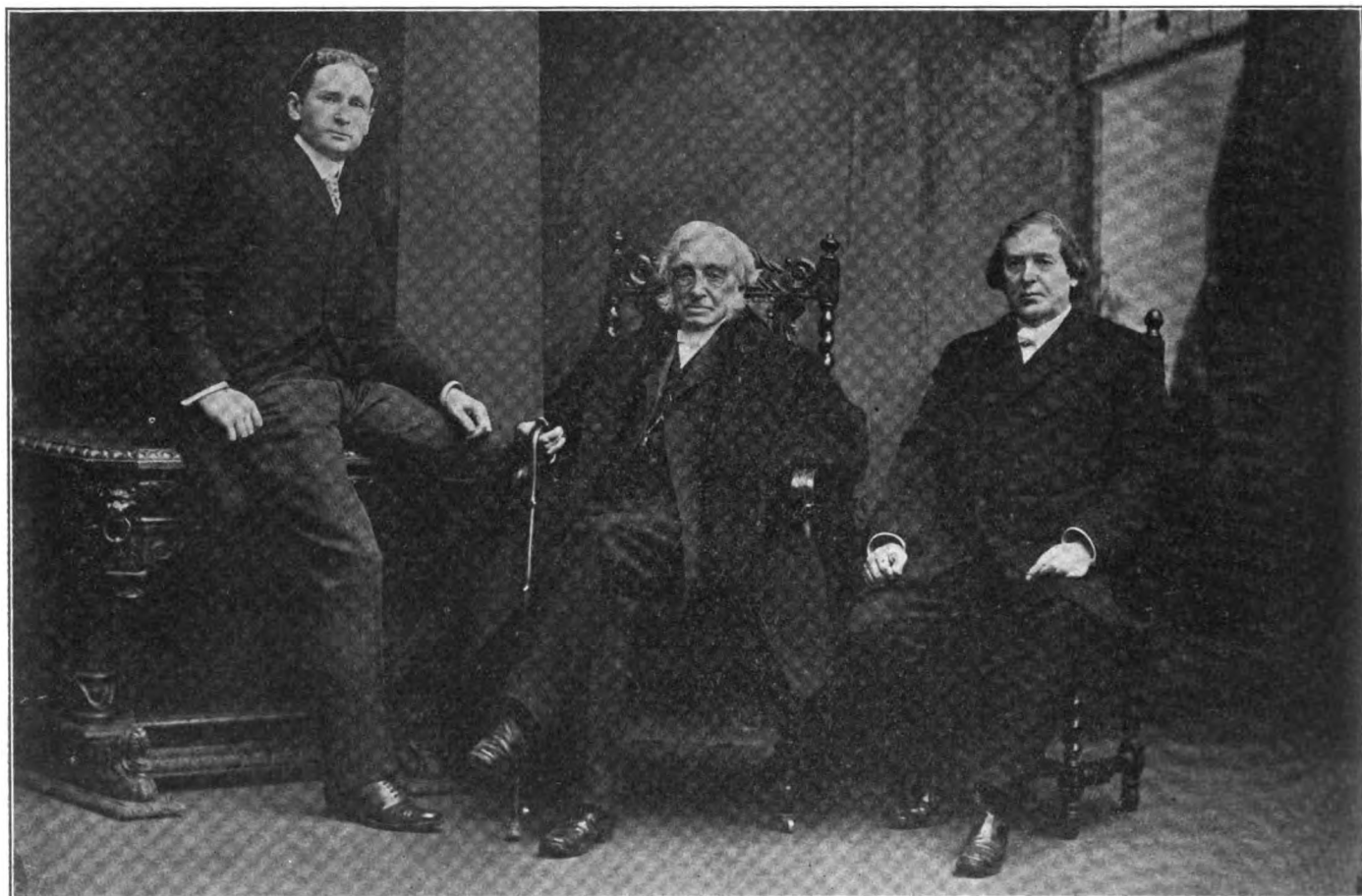
fifty Years in One Home--Lafayette Avenue Church Celebrates Anniversary

BY ANDREW STEVENSON

THERE are all sorts of celebrations taking place these days marking anniversaries of one type or another. Few there are, however, that have to do with an institution of such importance as the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in the Borough of Brooklyn, New York, which has now occupied continuously the same edifice for fifty years. Nor is the historian able, in dealing with the average anniversary, to chronicle anything like as interesting and inspiring a story as is the one connected with this great church.

It should be remembered that the country was well into the Civil War fifty years ago—there was uncertainty and anxiety everywhere. Times were hard and even the most courageous had periods of restlessness and questionings. Nevertheless, the building project planned by the founder and honored pastor of

whom are now the recognized leaders of the religious, missionary, educational, literary and commercial enterprises of the world. Great mission stations established and largely maintained by the church abroad; splendid buildings erected and maintained for mission work in the homeland; adequate branches planted in the home city; young men led into the ministry; scores of members volunteering for foreign mission service and a place on the governing boards of the denominational enterprises at home perhaps not equalled by any other church. Furthermore, the part taken by Lafayette Avenue Church in inter-denominational and philanthropic movements and institutions is generally known throughout the country. Lastly, but not least, no note of uncertainty has ever been sounded from the pulpit. No one has ever gone out of the church uncertain as to God's love and the way of salvation. No pulpit has ever sounded a clearer note of



LAFAYETTE AVENUE CHURCH'S THREE PASTORS OF FIFTY YEARS.
THE REV. CLELAND B. McAFEE, THE REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, THE REV. DAVID GREGG.

the church for many years, Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler, was carried through to completion with a determination and a thoroughness that would surprise most people even to this day of large undertakings and quick execution. The church organization was then five years old—the location of the church on Lafayette avenue, at the corner of South Oxford street, almost on the eastern border of the city. Many doubted the wisdom of building so far out, but Dr. Cuyler's wisdom and foresight in this instance, as in many others, proved to be correct. Thus in war times, when money was very hard to raise, with a small congregation of 175 members, a \$54,000 church building was erected and, what has since developed into one of the greatest organized Christian forces in the world, was thus begun.

And what of the record? Three pastors only during the fifty years! Theodore L. Cuyler, David Gregg and Cleland B. McAfee! Is it any wonder God has been able to do a great work in this historic building? Few churches have ever been blessed with such a trio of leaders. Great preachers? Yes. Great pastors? Yes. Great leaders? None greater. Just glance at the record of fifty years. Over 8,000 members received, many of

confident hope; of inspiration and of leadership in all that goes to redeem the lives of men from sin and selfishness and lift them into places of safety and usefulness.

It is a pleasure to record even thus briefly the magnificent record of this church and it is hoped some one, qualified to do so, will soon write the real story of the Lafayette Avenue Church, its unusual pastors and its great officers and members.

The crowning event of the anniversary came Sunday evening when, to a crowded church, the magnificent chorus choir, led by the matchless organist and composer, Professor John Hyatt Brewer, and the gifted soprano, Miss Elizabeth Tudor, sang Mendelssohn's Hymn of Praise; an inspiring address was delivered by the pastor, Dr. McAfee, under whom the church is now doing the greatest work in its history. Then came the message from the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, given by the General Assembly's Moderator, Dr. John F. Carson of the Central Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, who was followed by the Moderator of the National Council of the Congregational Churches of America, Dr. Nehemiah Boynton, pastor of the Clinton Avenue Congregational Church.