

temptations almost irresistible, it was sought to change the demand of qualification, the General Assembly chose rather to suffer the loss of a valuable limb, than to swerve from principles which were necessary to the healthful integrity of the body. If our brethren are unanimous in anything, it is, in Luther's judgment, that sound and varied learning must be sustained, if we would preserve the Church.

You will mistake my meaning, if you fancy that the learning which I am holding up as suitable for the minister of the gospel, is such as might be demanded in a professor of the sciences, or a writer on classical and philological literature. It may be as great as these, but it differs in kind, and excludes a multitude of details, on which the other must expend labour. It is ministerial, or in its widest sense theological learning, which is pleaded for: but this is enough for all the powers. No man need ever expatiate beyond the metes of divine science, from any want of room in the latter, or any excess of faculty above what may be consumed on the Scriptures. Lightfoot and Marekius, and other voluminous original commentators, doubtless were ready to acknowledge that they had touched these waters only *primoribus labiis*. It is therefore with no extenuation of the work, that I say the clerical student is to pursue clerical studies: yet it may prevent misapprehension, and remove objection, by showing the perfect harmony of the discipline proposed, with the daily incumbent duties of the sacred calling.

There is such a thing as maintaining a transient popularity, and having a little usefulness, without any deep study; but this fire of straw soon burns out, this cistern soon fails. The preacher who is constantly pouring out, and seldom pouring in, can pour but a little while. I need hardly caution you against the sententious maxim, prevalent among freshmen, concerning those great geniuses, who *read little, but think much*. They even cite, as of their party, one of the greatest readers who ever wrote, as every work of his goes to prove; to wit, Shakspeare! The greatest thinkers have been the greatest readers, though the converse is by no means true. In reading the writings of those

most remarkable for originality and invention—and mark, it is in reference to these qualities only the reference is now made—we know not whether most to admire the adventurous flights of their own daring, or their extensive acquaintance with all that has been written before, on their chosen topics. You will see this remark strikingly verified in the productions of Descartes, Leibnitz, and Hegel. While, however, I say thus much for reading, I own that reading is but a part of study; and that he cannot be admitted to the title of learned, who has not the habit of concocting, methodizing, and expressing his own thoughts. The great point is this: there must be perpetual acquisition. This is the secret of preaching. What theologians say of preparation for death, may be said of preparation for preaching; there is *habitual*, and there is *actual* preparation: the current of daily study, and the gathering of material for a given task. It may be compared with what is familiar, in another faculty, that of Law: the lawyer has his course of perpetual research, in the great principles of general jurisprudence, or the history of statutory enactment, or the systematic arrangement of practical methods, and he has his laborious and sometimes sudden reading-up for an emergent case. Should he confine himself entirely to the latter, he must become a narrow, though perhaps an acute, practitioner. So likewise the clerical scholar, however diligent, punctual, and persistent, who throws his whole strength into the preparation of sermons, and who never rises to higher views, or takes a larger career through the wide expanse of scientific and methodized truth, must infallibly grow up stiff, cramped, lopsided, and defective. His scheme of preaching may never take him through the entire curve of theology and Scripture; or the providential leadings of his ministry may bring him again and again over the same portions. These are evils which can be prevented only by the resolute pursuit of general studies, irrespectively of special pulpit performance. Such habits will tend to keep a man always prepared; and instead of getting to the bottom of his barrel as he grows older, he will be more and more prepared, as long as his faculties last. But the grand evil to be warred against by the younger preacher, is not that of

confining himself to pulpit preparation, but that of not preparing at all : and by preparation I mean study. To seize a pen, and dash off a discourse, on a subject heretofore not familiar, and with such thoughts as occur while one is writing, may insure ease and fluency of manner, but is little better than the delivery of the same thoughts without writing ; indeed, the latter possesses some great advantages, from the elevation of the powers by sympathy, passion, and attendant devotion. Engrave it upon your souls, that the whole business of your life is to prepare yourself for the work, and that no concentration of powers can be too great. The crying evil of our sermons is *want of matter* ; we try to remedy this evil, and that evil, when the thing we should do is to get something to say : and the laborious devotion of some young clergymen to rhetoric and style, instead of theology, is as if one should study a cookery-book when he should be going to market. I yesterday listened to a sermon (and I am glad I do not know the preacher's name), which was twenty-five minutes long, but of which all the matter might have been uttered in five. It was like what the ladies call trifle, all sweetness and froth, except a modicum of cake at the bottom. It was doubtless written extempore. When a young clergyman once inquired of Dr Bellamy, what he should do to have matter in his discourses, the shrewd old gentleman replied, " Fill up the cask, *fill up the cask*, FILL UP THE CASK ! Then, if you tap it anywhere, you will get a good stream ; but if you put in but little, it will dribble, dribble, dribble, and you must tap, tap, tap ; and then get but little after all."

If, in this daily pursuit of knowledge, you keep constantly before your mind the end for which you seek it, there need be no fear of excess : it is studies which divert us from the evangelic work, that are to be deprecated. To the last day of life, regard your mental powers as given you to be kept in continual working order, and continual improvement, and this with reference to the work of preaching and teaching. You will find all great preachers to have lived thus ; and though neither you nor I should ever become great, we shall sink the less by reason of