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NEITHER TOO LONG NOR TOO
LOUD.

EVERY candidate for the Methodist ministry is asked this question:—"Will you preach at every suitable opportunity, endeavouring not to speak too long nor too loud?" There is common-sense about this question. It suggests to the candidate that there are fitting occasions for preaching, which should not be unimproved; and that in the delivery of the message, there must not be either wearying verbosity, or blustering noise. In the occupancy of the pulpit, in the conduct of the Sabbath School, in the participation of the prayer-meeting, these suggestions are worthy of being borne in mind.

Our day is particularly anxious for "short sermons." In general, we pay but little heed to that demand. For, as a rule, it comes from newspaper reporters, or from those who have not the most lively sympathy with the grand aims of the pulpit. Yet, this cry must not be rudely dismissed from court without a hearing. For it can make out a good case that sermons are sometimes too long-winded, making all the hearers sin against the grace of patience. Some preachers might be addressed as our Lord addressed His disciples, "Use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking!" Verbosity, endless repetitions, are not favourites with the people. A clear, racy, and distinct enunciation of the message is more certain of favour. While no rule for time can be urged for sermons—the variety of themes demanding variety of treatment—it is better to err on the side of brevity than length; better to send away a people with an appetite for more, than surfeited. As to noise, that is indefensible, except when the people are all hard of hearing. The time has passed when the remark should be made of a preacher, "He's a regular ear-splitter!" Very seldom is an ear-splitter a heart-opener. Neither too low as to be inaudible, nor too loud to be offensive, is a good rule for the preachers.

Length in the Sabbath-School is a sad mistake. The little folk, accustomed to ceaseless activities, cannot be expected to remain quiet while some endless brother is spreading out his "few and feeble remarks" before them. A child can forgive a great many sins more easily than tediousness. He jumps at his conclusions; goes straight to the heart of things, and can only admire and appreciate the teacher or speaker that adopts his own plans. Crispness, raciness, brevity are nowhere more effective than in the Sabbath Schools. As to tone, the gentle and persuasive ought to supplant the loud and boisterous when talking to the children. The pathetic takes well with the little folk, for they

live in the domain of feeling. Neither too long, then, nor too loud.

The prayer-concert is often injured by oversight of this sensible rule. To have a brother arise and announce that he "will preface his prayer with a remark or two" (which before he has done has grown to a hundred), and then wade through a long prayer, in which he has woven together every conceivable subject, and others quite inconceivable, is a sad weariness of the flesh and spirit. And then to have noise perhaps thrown in to fill up the contract, is altogether too much. We once heard a man leading in prayer at a meeting, who began on the lower key and ran up the gamut until he had attained a positive screech, when voice and ideas suddenly forsook him. An awkward pause; when he exclaimed, "O Lord, what a predicament we are in!" Yes, but what of the predicament into which he had thrown others? The whole scene was ludicrous in the extreme. The prayer-meeting, to be useful, must be full of pithy and devout remarks and prayers; and an excellent motto for all active participants is, "Neither too long nor too loud."

A FINE EXAMPLE.

OUR churches, of nearly all denominations, have just spent a week in prayer, for the Divine blessing on the labours of the coming year. Some of them are still continuing the service. How much of *real prayer* has there been?—the prayer that desires and therefore asks?—the prayer that lays hold of the promises of God, and believes that "He is a rewarder of them that *diligently seek Him*?" Only He who searches the heart can answer. Let us hope there has been much, and that the earnestness will not exhaust itself with seeking for a week or a month, but that the Lord's remembrancer will "give Him no rest till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

The good Nehemiah affords us a fine example of the spirit of a true lover of Zion, and one in down-right earnest in prayer and effort for her prosperity. Most tender and touching are the petitions he presents to the God of Heaven, as he fills his mouth with arguments, and pleads for the opportunity to do something for her restoration (Neh. i.). It was not so much the thought he possessed, as the thought that "possessed him." It shows itself in his countenance. He is sick at heart—with hope long deferred—so that the king whose cupbearer he is is concerned for him, and demands to know the cause. "This is nothing else but sorrow of heart," he says.

That was God's way of answering his prayer. Many of us have attended weeks of special services without our reaching that *white heat* of intense, restless desire that gained the ear of the Almighty, and secured the coveted reward! And Nehemiah doubtless might have "said his prayers," as many do, long enough

before he would have received any answer! "Ye shall seek me, and find me," is the promise, "when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Sleepy formalities, such as we often call prayer, rise no higher than the ceiling of God's house!

Let those who have the interests of Christ's kingdom at heart consider what is meant by deficiency in the revenue of Home Missions. It means the crippling of the minister in preaching the Gospel and discharging the manifold duties of his office. It means suffering to mothers who are struggling with a hard lot, and hardship to helpless children. It signifies more than this, even the starving of the minds and hearts of those called to minister at the altar. It implies worries and heart burnings that will greatly mar the usefulness and happiness of pastors. The members of churches should consider these matters. Of course there is the cry of hard times, but let us reflect, how much more hard they will be made to those who are afflicted with chronic hard times. Our saving should begin with the luxuries of life. There is more spent by members of churches upon tobacco and other indulgences than would endow the Home Missionary Ministers with princely munificence. And so far as we have observed, it is not the poorest members who make the greatest outcry about hard times, and the reduction of Home Mission salaries. These often continue giving from their poverty in the fulness of their liberality, what they might with good reason retain for themselves and families.

After all, the great matters in connection with the Temperance cause are the education of the children in the principles of abstinence, and the introduction of simple pledges into Sabbath schools, and other organizations of the young. This work is—we are glad to say—being largely undertaken by the Churches, and is most promising for the future of the cause of Temperance. Let us have the children, and we have gained Canada for ultimate prohibition.

It is very pleasing to observe that the young and rising generation is rather opposed to the drinking usages and practices which pertained to the olden times. The sentiment has only to grow, and—with the blessing of God—it will bring about the day when drink will drop out of our social customs, out of the list of beverages, and we are inclined to think out of the class of medicines. There is an altered feeling towards alcoholic drinks amongst the leading physicians of all countries. And a most important sign of the times is the fact that four members of the Royal family are abstainers.

THE catalogue of Andover Theological Seminary gives a total of seventy-seven students; nineteen of whom are in the senior class, twenty-nine in the middle, twenty in the junior, seven in the special, and two are resident licentiates.