

so that you see the keyboard with its three manuals and its bank of stops on each side, above the minister's reading desk. In front of the organ, and facing the congregation, are the choir-pews, and in front of them again the semi-circular platform on which the reading desk is placed. This platform has no railing, so that when Mr. Wilson stands on one side of it, as he sometimes does, you see his full length. At the back of it there is a comfortable sort of divan or sofa. The floor is carpeted with crimson. The joinery everywhere is of light oak. The organ front is very showy, a greater exhibition of big ornamented pipes could scarcely be made. General effect, that of a music-hall or concert-room of a superior order. From every seat a full view of the preacher's platform is easily obtained. There are no obstructive pillars. There is plenty of daylight everywhere. It was the original Methodist view in John Wesley's time, and for years after, that architecture was not essential to worship. In bare and barn-like structures the fervent spirit of the time found vent and experienced an elevation and a spiritual warmth altogether apart from the effect of any "temples made with hands." For many years a plain sedateness was the mark of the conventicles of the religious renaissance which had found a new and glorious interpretation of the idea that "God is a spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." It is still, no doubt, the opinion of Methodists that architecture is not essential to worship. There is not a minister of the denomination who would feel himself under any disability if he had to preach in the plainest of old-fashioned meeting houses. Modern Methodism, however, runs to expensiveness in building, to more or less of decoration, and to an extravagant development of organ-front. There was a certain meaning and sentiment in the old plain meeting-houses. There is often none at all in many of the modern temples of this faith. They are a great deal more costly than the old fashioned ones. But it is entirely doubtful if the expenditure upon them is repaid by the effect produced. Yet I would not cavil and carp at any evolution of religious worship and its accompaniments. I wish to have a sympathetic insight into the feelings of those whose places of worship I visit from time to time. And it may be that these great big organs that I see in places of worship, so much in excess of the apparent requirements as to capacity, and so extraordinarily extensive in the show they make, are after all only a result of a dim feeling that the House of God should in some way be different from places of everyday use. Even these things that seem to me so secular and so unmeaning, may be transfigured, to some souls, with a glory and a sanctity the fathoming of which is beyond me.

How much more interesting than any architecture or music or stained glass or any aesthetic consideration whatever is a living soul! Rev. W. F. Wilson begins to read a chapter from one of the Epistles, and to comment upon it, and you forget all the surroundings and listen to him just as you would in a desert place with no surroundings at all. He has a pleasant voice with a firm, ringing, musical tone in it; it is a tenor rather than a bass voice—say a "tenore robusto." Also his enunciation has a slight provincialism in it that smacks of the soil. Brother Wilson is a fine specimen of Canadian manhood. He speaks easily; he was evidently born to say what was in him, just as some men are born to think and to express themselves laboriously as with groans and tears. Brother Wilson's thoughts clothe themselves instantly with words. He speaks from the heart, and appeals more to the emotions and to the spiritual nature than to the intellect of his hearers. He is a natural genius, he is a poet, he is a confirmed optimist, but I should hardly call him a judicial theologian. He has so much sunshine and good nature in him that it wells up and overflows in his look and in his word. He has not a trace of the scientific method in him; that is part of his charm in a world which is really tired of science and which feels that after all reason is no guide in religion. Here is a man who besides being a brilliant talker, has poetic sensibility in him, insight into human nature, a magnetic power of putting himself *en rapport* with his hearers and above all, faith in God. He has a wonderful style; racy, free, richly-coloured, and flexible. He can pass in a moment from denunciation to quiet humour, and from humour to pathos, and from pathos to the merest commonplace of life. Though he has manly strength and maturity, he retains some of the guileless sincerity of the child. It is

no wonder that people gather to listen to him. It is very easy to listen to him. He makes points all along. He is a master of assemblies and his words are as nails. They form a kind of conversation—the conversation of a brilliant man speaking to his friends from a platform about things which are near his heart.

In appearance Rev. W. F. Wilson is decidedly clerical. See him walking along the street and you might take him for a Roman priest of the best sort, his clean-shaven, refined, albeit somewhat full face, and his all-round ecclesiastical collar aiding the fancy. His features are well cut, his chin is of the sort that is commonly supposed to denote the capacity for humour; he has a fine massive head, and his hair, which is somewhat thin at the top of the forehead, is worn a good length at the back. If you can imagine a nice looking parson and a distinguished actor, with a taste for comedy, merged into one personality that is Mr. Wilson's look. If he were on the stage he would be of course always cast for the clerical parts, and he would not want much making up for any kind of hero. He would want a good deal of making up before he could take the part of a villain. When I say that in thinking over his general platform style, I could not help feeling what a success he would have made as an actor, I mean the very reverse of indicating any mere simulation. You know that what he says comes from his heart and impresses his mind, and it is because he feels deeply himself that he can make you feel. But he is gifted by nature with the faculty of expression. He expresses what is in him by smiles, by gravity, by inflections of voice; it comes out in unstudied but suitable attitudes; it runs off his extended arm. You long to tell him a good story in order to hear it produced in the best possible way and with every accessory that will make it tell. It will be the same story, but there will be all the difference between it and your crude narration of it that there is between a piece of scrawled manuscript written by an indifferent penman and the same thing when it appears in all the glory of beautiful type on a sumptuous page, with illustrations by a skilled artist. Surely this is a great gift, and when it is joined, as it is in Mr. Wilson, to a fine faculty of selection which enables him to take from the Bible, from current literature, from current life and from nature, the things that will tell in discourses or comments, the product is one of much value to ordinary people. The common ways of this world are often too dull and dreary for us to do otherwise than gladly and thankfully recognize the endowment of one who can "take of the things of God and show them unto us," who can pick up bits of life and experience and literature and nature, that we have passed without seeing a hundred times, and can display them so that an enlivening ray streams from them at once. Such a gift may degenerate into a mere purveying of sensations and cheap clap-trap; but, on the other hand it is a gift that may be laid on the Divine altar and may be the means of refreshment and life to many souls.

Mr. Wilson is frankly unconventional and free from the stiff clerical dignity that is afraid of itself. He was commenting on a verse in Romans: "Be kindly affectioned one to another, brethren;" and he said: "When I was laid on my back a week or two ago, in consequence of that fall on the ice, and so many of you came to see me and sympathize with me, I felt sometimes when you had gone away, that after all there was a good deal of real kind feeling in the world. Then the thought came that there was many a poor fellow more seriously sick than I was, in some of the back streets of Toronto, that did not have anybody to come to see him and condole with him and wish him God speed on his way to recovery. Brethren, think of that this afternoon, and if you know anybody in this case, who, perhaps, has not many friends, go to him and grasp him by the hand and tell him you hope he'll soon be about again. If you feel in his hand-clasp something like returning vigour and in the brightening of his eye something like the old look, just tell him you are glad of it; and if it is sadly the other way, and the shadow is over him can't you say something to him of the Christ you profess to love, and who will be with him through everything, even in the darkest valley of all." A few moments afterwards he was announcing the last hymn and gave out the wrong number. By the tablets on the organ front we could see that it was to be the 445th. He