

## 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."

## THE HIGHER LIFE.

A GREAT deal has been said and written of late years about the "Higher Life," "Christian Perfection," "Second Conversion," and so forth: much of which is true, and much of which is foolish and misleading. The fall and silencing of the most prominent advocate of the latest form of that doctrine, the author of "Holiness through Faith," has undoubtedly diminished the *talk* on the subject, and has, we hope, deepened and broadened the *thinking* of Christian people in regard to it. It was a sad thing that so eloquent an exponent of the theory should so suddenly betray the weakness of poor depraved human nature just when we were looking for the most sublime exemplification of it, but it has doubtless been working for good. To us, it appears as if it had been divinely permitted to direct our attention to the necessity of more of what, for want of a better phrase, we shall call by way of contrast, the "Lower Life" of practical religion. What the church and the world most need is evidence of a *first* conversion—a conversion that affects a man's whole nature and social relationships—that makes men honest, true, pure, gentle, unselfish, as well as devout, and liberal to religious objects. A mere conventional religion, lying only in the acceptance of a creed, and an experience which does nothing for the man who holds it—nothing, at least, to transform him, and make him a better man—maybe a passport into the Church on earth, but will never be recognized by Him who has said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but *he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven.*" Let us have this practical religion—this "applied science" of theology—based upon repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and then "let us go on unto perfection." The "higher" the better after that!

We have no faith in the theory of sanctification that teaches us to look for sinless perfection by one great act of faith, any more than we have in the theory of atonement that would have us believe in the forgiveness of all sin, past, present, and future, by a similar act. Both are, in our judgment, very dangerous errors. A much safer and more Scriptural view of the Divine method of sanctifying human souls will be found in the recital of Paul's experience in 1 Cor. ix., 26, 27, and that we earnestly commend to the attention of every one who is sincerely desirous of greater attainments in the Christian life.

## CHOICE LITERATURE.

FROM TEST TO EARNEST.

BY REV. K. F. ROE.

## CHAPTER XV.—HEMSTEAD SEES "OUR SET."

They soon reached Mrs. Byram's elegant country house, which gleamed afar, ablaze with light. The obsequious footman threw open the door, and they entered a tropical atmosphere laden with the perfumes of exotics. Already the music was striking up for the chief feature of the evening. Bel reluctantly accepted of Hemstead's escort, as she had no other resource.

"He will be so awkward!" she had said to Lottie, in irritable protest.

And at first she was quite correct, for Hemstead found himself anything but at home in the fashionable revel. Bel, in her efforts to get him in the presence of the lady of the house that they might pay their respects, reminded one of a little steam yacht trying to manage a ship of the line.

Not only were Lottie and De Forrest smiling at the scene, but also other elegant people, among whom Hemstead towered in proportions too vast and ill-managed to escape notice; and to Addie, her cousin's lack of ease and grace was worse than a crime.

Bel soon found some city acquaintances, and she and her escort parted with mutual relief. Hemstead drifted into the hall, where he would be out of the way of the dancers, but through the open doors could watch the scene.

And this he did with a curious and observant eye. The party he came with expected him to be either dazzled and quite carried away with the scenes of the evening, or else shocked and very solemn over their dissipation. But he was rather inclined to be philosophical, and study up this new phase of life. He would see the *crème de la crème*, who only would be present, as he was given to understand. He would discover if they were made of different clay from the people of Scrub Oaks. He would breathe the social atmosphere, which to Addie, his aunt, and even to Lottie, he was compelled to fear, was as the breath of life. These were the side issues; but his chief purpose was to study Lottie herself. He would discover if she were in truth as good a girl—as full of promise—as he had been led to believe at first.

Of course he was a predestined "wall-flower" upon such an occasion. Addie had said to Mrs. Byram, in a tone hard to describe but at once understood:

"A cousin from the West, who is studying for the ministry;" and Hemstead was immediately classed in the lady's mind among those poor relations who must be tolerated for the sake of their connections.

He was a stranger to all, save those he came with, and they soon completely ignored and forgot him, save Lottie by whom he was watched, but so furtively that she seemed as neglectful as the rest.

It was one of the fashions of the hour—a phase of etiquette as ill-bred as the poorest social slang—not to introduce strangers. Mrs. Byram and her daughters were nothing if not fashionable, and in this case the mode served their inclination, and beyond a few formal words they willingly left their awkward guest to his own resources.

He could not understand how true courtesy permitted a hostess to neglect any of her guests, least of all those who from diffidence or any cause seemed most in need of attention. Still, in the present instance, he was glad to be left alone.

The scenes around him had more than the interest of novelty, and there was much that he enjoyed keenly. The music was good, and his quick ear kept as perfect time to it as did Lottie's feet. He thought the square dances were beautiful and perfectly unobjectionable, a vast improvement on many of the rude and often stupid games that he had seen at the few companies he had attended, and Lottie appeared the embodiment of grace, as she glided through them.

But when a blase-looking fellow, in whose eye lurked all evil passions and appetites, whirled her away in a waltz, he again felt, with indignation, that there was another instance where fashion—custom—insolently trampled on divine law and womanly modesty. He had seen enough of the world to know that Lottie, with all her faults, was too good to touch the fellow whose embrace she permitted. Could she—the fellow the others be, ignorant of his character when it was indelibly stamped on his face?

But he soon noticed that his attentions were everywhere received with marked pleasure, and that Mrs. Byram and her daughters made much of him as a favoured guest. In anger he saw how sweetly Lottie smiled upon him as they were passing near. She caught his dark look, and interpreting it to mean something like jealousy, became more gracious toward her rose-looking attendant, with the purpose of piquing Hemstead.

A little later Bel came into the hall, leaning on the arm of a gentleman. Having requested her escort to get her a glass of water she was left alone a few moments. Hemstead immediately joined her and asked:

"Who is that blase-looking man upon whose arm Miss Marden is leaning?"

"And upon whom she is also smiling so enchantingly? He is the beau of the occasion, and she is the belle."

"Do you know anything about him? I hope his face and manner do him injustice."

"I fear they do not. I imagine he is even worse than he looks."

"How, then, can he be such a favourite?"

She gave him a quick, cynical look, which intimated, "You are from the back country," but said:

"I fear you will think less of society when I tell you the reasons. I admit that it is very wrong; but so it is. He has three great attractions; he is brilliant; he is fast; he is immensely rich—therefore society is at his feet."

"Oh no, not society, but a certain clique who weigh things in false balances," said Hemstead quickly. "How strange it is that people are ever mistaking their small circle for the world."