

That Death-Like Silence

BY MISS ROSE WAKEFIELD

I CONFESS I was hunting bargains, and the silk gowned wax ladies in the big department store window, looked at me quite brightly, but I never once expected them to speak. I didn't get my bargain (whoever does?), but I got an *idea*, that I walked home, resolved itself into a proposition, and here it is—

Most of our Leaguers are well dressed, and no one will deny their brightness, but we never once expect them to speak—in discussion. They are for the time being lay figures. This is, I submit, foreign to the original intent of our League, and to our work a distinct loss.

If I may be permitted to diagnose this deathlike silence, I should say that it's primal cause lies not in the pew but on the platform. "Taking the topic" has become in too many of our Leagues a curious and doubtful formality. The topic is "taken" from the current religious newspaper, from the Commentary, from the Era, and, without quotation marks, dropped into the midst of young people who know too well the difference between "a stone" and "bread," to try to break up any such material. Now, with wise discretion, let me hasten to explain, that the ERA topics are verily bread, and good bread at that, but, bread that has been stolen, and then dried in the oven of an impersonal *paper*, may readily be mistaken for a stone. I want to be clear—very clear. According to my ethics, a paper made up largely of material taken verbally from any source, and presented without due credit, is largely a dishonest paper. It is, moreover, a paper shorn

elegance remember), makes you ready to bear testimony to some phase of truth.

There is much to be said, and I am afraid to say it, lest I reach not YOU but the historic waste-paper basket. May I in closing throw out a handful of hints? They are absolutely worthless, unless you happen to use them.

1. Generally speaking, a "talk" will promote more discussion than a paper, and it's not so, that you've only three who can talk. You have THIRTY who lack not so much courage to begin as consecration to fail.

2. How do I know? Why, I remember the Sunday when in a very small meeting a young girl's carefully prepared "talk" ended in a tearful failure, and three years later, listened wonderingly, as in a large public League service she "talked" with ease and great power of the things of God.

3. But you still shake your head. Very well, a paper it shall be, and a success it may be.

(a) If you will prepare with prayer and point. Some of our League papers fairly bristle with points, but they are as mere pinpricks in result. Others grip you. Why this difference? Is it not verily because the Holy Spirit has in the one case been ignored, while in the other He has been honored in every sentence of preparation?

(b) If you will give your message as though you faced an OPPORTUNITY instead of an ORDEAL—"I have a message from God unto thee."

(c) If you will "stir up" the voice that is in you—not more than one-third of our League papers can be easily heard, and this is not a trivial but a most serious charge.

4. Divide your paper into four sections, leaving space for a three-minute discussion between each, and before beginning to read announce that you will ask Miss Bright to open the discussion upon the first section. Mr. Ready may be called upon for the second section, and so on. Kindly but firmly, urge other members on to their feet, and don't be afraid of an un-Methodistic use. You must WEAR out the silence in your League, if you can't break it.

5. Resolve your audience into a quotation class—"Please be ready when I have finished reading, to quote one sentence from this paper." You will have an attentive audience at least.

6. Question upon your own paper—close, persistent varied questions—asking your President at close to sum up the points thrown out.

7. Pause, after the most stirring sentence in your paper, and ask—"How many of you believe this?" Get ten people to say, "I believe it," and you have probably broken the evil spell of that meeting.

8. Before reading your first sentence, get a dozen members pledged upon their feet to the service of discussion. If you can't get them onto their feet, get them on to their knees.

9. Spend a whole evening upon this lack in your League. Talk it out, thrash it out, pray it out—BUT GET IT OUT.

The very life of our whole League organization depends upon the presence of the Holy Spirit, and remember—"where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is LIBERTY."

Hamilton, Ont.



DEAF-MUTE GIRLS SIGNING "NEARER MY GOD TO THEE," AT THE INSTITUTION FOR THE DEAF AND DUMB.

of much of its natural strength, for we may not drive home a thought that has never really been ours, and I doubt if the Holy Spirit will supply this lack.

A trace to other people's papers!!! Let us for the honor of our Church, and for our own credit as Christians, present what is our very own. "It means work"—I admit that it does, but since when have John Wesley's children learned to be lazy?

As Leaguers we have sources of critical information for the foundation—we have ideas, we have everyday experiences, we have eyes to see in the street cars, and ears to hear in the shop and factory—these things need only to meet plain, earnest English, to be energized into a paper that men and women will give heed unto. A paper, moreover, that can be discussed—that meets you full of a warm personality, and because of its clear-cut facts, because of its unction (not its