

HELPFUL SERMONS.

They need not be, and are not, conformed to any particular type. Considering the variety of taste and intellectual habit represented in nearly every congregation, almost any method of sermonizing, provided the product be a true sermon, appeals to some of the hearers.

This is true even of a severely theological discourse. There are always some people who are interested in the discussion of doctrine. They want to have arrayed before them the aggregate teaching of the Scriptures on the great themes of revelation and to hear what conclusions the science of theology draws from them and the methods by which these conclusions are reached. They want, also, to know how doctrine fits in with doctrine and how they are articulated into a self-consistent whole. Our forefathers, especially, delighted in this style of sermon, as when the congregation of old Thomas Boston listened with rapt attention while he discoursed on "Faith and Hope. Objects of the Divine Complacency." In four sections, from which he deducted six doctrines, each subdivided into from three to eight heads. It is not surprising that the "practical improvements" had to be deferred to the following Sunday, when he presented them under eighty-six heads.

A method of sermonizing popular with both pulpit and pew is the topical. Perhaps this is because it is a simple and direct way of preaching. It unifies the sermon and makes analysis easy. A preacher who would wander from the track in dealing with such themes as "The Wages of Sin," or "Christ our Exemplar," "The Yoke of Christ," would have to go out of his way to do it. And the things that make it easy to combine unity with clearness of analysis in this method of preaching make it easy for the hearer to follow the thought and to carry it away with him when the service is over. It allows also the introduction of exposition of Scripture and of theological statement.

To many preachers the expository method seems best. Its advantages are truly great. It contributes to systematic study of the Bible on the part of the pastor and to thorough understanding of it on the part of the hearer. It is perhaps the most difficult of all ways of preaching. To take a passage of Scripture, to grasp the central thought running through it, to interpret this and bring it into vital relation to the practical needs of the hearer, requires the highest art of the preacher. In the hands of a slovenly sermonizer this method degenerates into a series of running commentaries on a section of Scripture, generally commonplace and with no principle of unity binding them together. For a lazy preacher it is the easiest way to occupy a half hour of the service, and at the same time it is the quickest way to send his hearers to sleep. But in capable hands it is a veritable unfolding of the Scriptures that are able to make wise into salvation.

But no method has a monopoly of advantage. Almost every style of preaching has had advocates and illustrious exponents. It is not so much a question of method as of substance. Homiletical rules are helpful, and acquaintance with them is a valuable part of the preacher's equipment. Nevertheless, a sermon may set all the rules of homiletics at defiance and yet bring to men the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ. No matter how closely it may conform in construction to the rules of the schools, or how correct may be its expositions, and how clear its theologizing, or how enriched by the results of study in biblical antiquities and Church history, if the sermon be cold, abstract throughout, remote from the real problems and daily needs of the hearers, it will largely fail of its purpose. It may awaken something of an intellectual interest in the minds of a few, but it will not likely touch even their hearts or persuade their wills. And as for the

great majority of the hearers who have come to God's house hoping for a message that will help them to bear their burdens and carry their sorrows and overcome their temptations and inspire them to fidelity to duty and to the cultivation of whatsoever things are true, just, lovely, and of good report—for these it will be a dead failure.—Lutheran Observer.

THE DEATH IN TRIFLES.

There is no more devilish mistake than that of thinking that one sin may be less dangerous than another. It is the Devil's particular mission to lodge this mistake in our minds; and he succeeds so well that we commit many sins over which we have no qualms because we count them so "trifling." Yet wrong-doing of any sort is sin; and sin is never a matter of quantity. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." And the wages of sin—any sin and all sin—is death. If a man ought to be at a certain place, or start a certain piece of work, at a given time, and he is a minute late when he need not have been, he is not likely to count that carelessness a sin that has in it all the possibilities of hell. The Devil would not have him recognize this—no, not for the world. But it is so. No man ever goes down into hell without having gotten there through the gradual breaking down of his entire will and character by carelessness in trifles so small that he ignored them. The purpose of Christ in a man is to empower him to recognize death and hell in that which the world counts innocent trifles, and to crowd them relentlessly out of his life.—Sunday School Times.

"IN THE WILDERNESS A CEDAR."

By Annie Johnson Flint.

In the wilderness a cedar—
Cool and pleasant shade it throws,
In its shelter birds are nesting
And a flower grows.

In the wilderness a cedar,
In the desert sands a spring,
In the drearest life the dawning
Of some better thing.

In the wilderness a cedar,
In the gloom of night a star,
In the darkest heart the vision
Of a God afar.

In the wilderness a cedar,
In the prison-house a dream,
In the duldest mind some inkling
Of the poet's gleam.

Is your world a seeming desert,
Bare of bloom and song and wings?
Look about you,—lo! the cedar
And the joy it brings.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

Mon.—Beulah land, the heart (Rom. 14: 16-19).

Tues.—A land of heart-peace (John 16: 22, 23).

Wed.—A land of plenty (Jer. 31: 12-14; 25, 26).

Thurs.—A land of joy (Isa. 66: 10-12, 14).

Fri.—A land of fellowship. Gal. 5: 25 to 6: 6).

Sat.—A land of love (1 Cor. 13: 1-13).

There was never a sunbeam lost, and never a drop of rain;

There was never a carol sweet that was sung in vain.

There was never a noble thought but through endless years it lives,
And never a blacksmith's blow, but an endless use it gives.

Know, then, that it still holds true, from the skies to the humblest soil,

That there is no wasted love, and there is no wasted toil.

If you want to serve your race go where no one else will go, and do what no one else will do.—Mary Lyon.

BEULAH LAND.*

By Robert E. Speer.

One of Daniel Quorn's practical religious notions was that there are through the land of life two routes, one high up along the hills with fine outlooks and clear air and God's skies just over us, and the other low, with views shut in, the far prospects limited, and the skies of God far away. There are such routes, many, many of them. We may move on any level we choose, all the way from the bogs and the morasses amid which we almost sink as we struggle along, to the pleasant path through the fields, to the higher path along the hillsides, to the top-most path of all along the mountain tops, not without its rough places but with all its difficulties atoned for by the exhilarating air and the noble effort and the far, far vistas of the distant things.

But this is not the accurate way to put it; for the Land of Beulah is not a rough hill route to be held with difficult struggle on our part. It is a land of rest, where we enter into a peace which nothing can mar, which we did not create, which we accept in Christ, who is made unto us peace and rest. To each of us is opened the possibility of living this life of rest in Christ. The Keswick hymn describes an experience within the reach of the faith of each of us.

"Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious in its bright increase.

Perfect yet it floweth fuller every day,
Perfect yet it groweth richer all the way.

"Stayed upon Jehovah hearts are fully blest
Finding as He promised perfect peace and rest.

"Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,
Never foe can follow, never traitor stand;

Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry touch the spirit there.

"Every joy or trial falleth from above,
Traced upon our dial by the Sun of Love.

We may trust Him fully all for us to do;
They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true."

And yet there is a struggle involved so long as the old nature lingers with us, and that is as long as life lasts. Here on earth we shall not be free from the need of war and conflict.

There are foes within and without who will not leave us, and who will find in our fancy that we are freed from them their very opportunity to take us and overwhelm us or to trick us into defeats of which we are not aware, as we go along in our foolish dreams of security.

Nevertheless, this struggle is not in Christ. It is in the life or the section of our life which is not yet safe in Him. In Him there is no strife or war or conflict. And what we need is simply to come wholly into Christ.

In the garrison of His love there is perfect peace. In His companionship there is perfect guidance. In His obedience there is invincible power. Christ is all that we need, and if we will only live in Christ we shall be in Beulah Land, in heavenly places while here on earth. Why will we not walk with Him in such heavenly bliss?

"In heavenly love abiding
No change my heart shall fear,
And safe in such confiding,
For nothing changes here.

The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid;
But God is round about me,
And can I be dismayed?"

We may live now the life of rest and confidence in Christ.

*Y.P. Topic, Sunday, November 14, 1909—Pilgrim's Progress Series. XI. Beulah Land (Isa. 62: 3-5).