

"FRESH AIR AS A MEANS OF GRACE."

We have just been reading an article in an exchange paper—the New York *Methodist*—under this heading, and the subject brought forward is of such importance, that we deem no apology necessary in bringing it before our readers. Of late our congregations have erected many new churches, not a few of them exhibiting a very marked improvement in the style of architecture, and in general appearance and comfort, on the buildings formerly erected for the worship of God. We congratulate the congregations that have erected these buildings, and we congratulate the Church at large, on the improved style of church architecture everywhere to be seen. We rejoice at seeing neat, commodious, tastefully designed and well-executed buildings springing up in our cities and towns, and even in our country villages. They are a token for good, an indication of growing taste, and, what is more, of growing liberality.

We have no reason to believe that the churches recently opened are defective in the matter of ventilation. But it is a notorious fact that many churches, in other respects all that could be desired, are defective in this respect. We subjoin a few paragraphs from the article to which we have already referred :

"It is not from want of reverence that we associate fresh air with means of grace, but from a deep conviction that there is a more intimate relation between them than is usually supposed. Services of prayer and praise can be better performed if the body be in a healthy condition; hence, whatever tends to weaken or to oppress it must, to a greater or less extent, interfere with the legitimate workings of what are called means of grace; while whatever tends to preserve the bodily strength, becomes, in like manner, a help to those means. The connection between man's material and spiritual natures is too often overlooked; there can be no real healthy progress unless both are recognized. Bring together a company of people to listen to a sermon, and to join in other religious services, and put them in a position of positive discomfort, where they will be perpetually reminded of the subjection of the longing soul to the weakness of the body, and what wonder if the exercises become wearisome and barren of profit! True, devout hearts can worship God anywhere; but they will have more enjoyment and profit in the service if they can forget for a while the imprisonment of the soul in the body.

"Many a good sermon has been spoiled for want of fresh air during its delivery. The preacher has felt heavy and the people drowsy; the one, perhaps, blaming his flock for listlessness, and the other finding fault with the minister for being uninteresting; while all the time the fault was in the foul air. Who has not noticed the deadening effects of bad air in a prayer meeting, when held, as such meetings often are, in the basement of a church—a room usually built with height of ceiling absurdly low in proportion to its size? In such a place, full of people, the air becomes vitiated in a few minutes, and every breath inhaled after that is poison. We have no doubt that many ministers have broken down in health and gone to premature graves by reason of preaching and praying, night after night, for weeks at a time, in badly ventilated rooms.

"Architects, building committees, trustees and sextons, ought to have some one to remind them perpetually that fresh air is a vital necessity in churches. Better do without almost anything else than this. A living Gospel ought never to be preached in a dead atmosphere. Give us plenty of pure air, and the preachers will preach better, the brethren will pray better, the people will sing better, all our meetings will be better attended, and followed by better consequences."