

### "He Does Not Visit."

He was the minister of a small village charge. He preached well, and when any of his people were sick he visited them faithfully, once a year, beside, he made a pastoral call. The life of the church was low, all but out. The people said, "Our minister does not visit."

It was the old, hoary-headed statement, that every minister of even five years' experience has heard. It does not explain the deadness of the church members. We have known a minister call, on an average, once a month, on some of his people, and they were as dry and lifeless as the bones Ezekiel saw.

In many instances irritation arises because it is suspected that the minister called twice across the street when he called only once at the house of the grumbler. And the grumbler pays quite as much, perhaps more towards the minister's salary as the people across the way pay! The grumbler lights upon another grumbler in the congregation, and they spend an afternoon at moral dissection. They are then prepared to enter upon an active campaign. Meantime the guileless minister goes on with his work, only pausing now and then to marvel at the lack of response.

One spiteful soul can do more harm in an afternoon than the most earnest minister can remedy in a month. God pity that soul when the books are opened. The indictment will not be that the minister was injured, but that Christ's work was hindered, and that the operation of the Holy Spirit was thwarted. When we hear that statement, "He does not visit," we involuntarily think of Judas. Among the disciples yet working for the devil!

### Half-Day Hearing in City Churches.

(Contributed.)

The practice of half-day hearing on Sunday is becoming more and more general, we learn, even among good men in the city churches; and it is a difficult question how to overcome the evil, if evil it be.

There are many reasons suggested to account for the habit; but they do not appear to satisfactorily account for it. Men want rest—physical rest—on Sunday, and they do not get it in church. The weary body cannot enter with zest into the service. One good discourse in one day is enough for most minds to digest; and it is rare to get two up-to-the-mark discourses from the same preacher on the same day. Evidently those who give this reason believe that famous maxim of England's greatest preacher, that it requires a great man to prepare one sermon a week. A man of less talents may prepare two, while any fool can prepare three or more. City pastors are expected to prepare two excellent discourses weekly for Sunday, a week-day evening discourse for prayer meeting, the lesson for the Bible class, besides visiting pastorally some of his flock and all of the sick, and at the same time appear on public platforms, etc., etc. Such is not an easy task, indeed it is little wonder if many fail to attain a high standard of excellence in everything. When such things are considered it is amazing that so many congregations are determined to have young men as their pastors, and it is more amazing that so many young men think they can easily accomplish the task. Experience seems to count for nothing in the ministry, while it is a sine qua non in every other path of life. A law student does not expect to be made a judge on his graduating, even with high honors. The generals of our armies are always tried men. Apprentices are not made foremen and managers as soon as they have completed their apprenticeship. Indeed, in every department of business, experience counts; but it is so easy, es-

pecially to honor students, to become excellent preachers, that experience is not needed to fill an important city charge. But here some one whispers, "What about Spurgeon?" Yes! Spurgeon was young enough when he began in London, and he continued brilliant to the end. But all are not Spurgeons, and we will gladly welcome another when we get him. Spurgeon, however, was not always equal, although he seldom failed to interest and instruct. This failure to interest is doubtless, in part, accountable for the practice of half-day hearing.

Many plans are suggested and tried as remedies. One suggests that conversion is needed. However, we are not sure that this would accomplish all that is wanted. It might secure some, but many at least of those who now only attend one service are excellent Christians. Indeed holiness does not consist in frequency of church attendance, but in walking with God, and a true Christian must do that more out of God's House than in it. Then what about the country Christian, who can seldom get more than one service on a Sunday, and often not one in some weeks.

Some preachers and church managers adopt a variety service in the evenings. Much and fine music, short, pithy addresses on current topics, etc. All good enough in their way, but not, it is to be feared, greatly to the edification of God's people, or likely to convert the sinner. A service should be to worship God, not please an indiscriminate audience; and therefore while the audience may be large at such a variety service, it will be found to be a different kind largely from one at an ordinary diet of worship.

Some preachers, we are informed, make the morning service specially an ordinary service for worship, putting much thought into the discourse as an exposition of some truth of Scripture; and the evening service is made more evangelistic. Such would naturally, it seems to us, augment the evil, as those who preferred the thoughtful discourse would be likely only to attend when such a discourse would be heard, and others would attend the other service. These are some of the plans suggested, and to some extent acted upon, with the result in some cases of large audiences, although largely different ones at each diet, and in other cases of as small, if not smaller audiences, than formerly. Is there then no cure? It is not yet secured at any rate. The matter is very ably handled in an article in this month's Homiletic Review, and there another suggestion is offered. It is to the effect that one of the regular services be abolished—say the morning one—and substitute a Sabbath school session for all church goers. The preacher then having only one discourse to prepare besides the preparation of the Lesson for Sunday school, would be able to put more labor upon his work and better results would follow. We have heard something like this hinted at in conventions, and the writer has often advocated the attendance at Sunday school of both old and young, as he feels convinced that an hour's true study of the Word will be more conducive to true spiritual growth than the listening to even an eloquent oration on a Scriptural theme. Such a plan would encourage the study of God's Word at home and that would be a distinct gain every way. And this in turn would tend to deepen home religion, which is really what is needed ere God's House can be greatly desired. The Psalmist's delight in God's Law was doubtless the reason of his great love for God's House. It is not likely that half-day hearing would be abolished, but in time it would doubtless be less common, and a more stalwart Christianity would be certain to be fostered by a systematic and constant study of the Word.

To him nothing is possible who is always dreaming of his past possibilities.—Carlyle.

### Literary Notes.

"Harum-Scarum Joe," by Will Allen Dromgole, is a pretty little story of the West. It tells of a murder, though it is not in the least sensational, and of how a wrongfully accused lad, the hero of the story, is acquitted. The book is bound most daintily in green, and the paper and printing are excellent. Dana Estes & Company, Boston.

The Western Presbyterian comes to us from Winnipeg. It is a handsome paper, published twice a month; and is of course, specially devoted to the interests of Presbyterianism in Manitoba and the great West. Rev. R. G. MacBeth, M.A., is the editor, and this fact guarantees a bright, well written paper. We wish the Western Presbyterian a very prosperous future.

Queen's Quarterly for October contains the conclusion of an article on "Philo and the New Testament"; articles on "Plan Sociology," "The Prophet Jeremiah—the Man," "The Best Sea Story Ever Written," and "Lightning Rods." "Early Records of Ontario" is continued from the July number, and "Current Events" is of interest to all. This bright magazine of Queen's University is always well printed and presents a uniformly desirable appearance.

Christianity Without the Conscience.—By the Rev. James Tait. (Montreal: The William Drysdale Co.) The author of this book not only believes that the world is in a very bad way, but also that the Church is at present in danger of making things worse instead of better. The burden of his song is that indicated by the title; the conscience or the moral element is being dropped out of modern life or pushed into the background. It is quite true that we are always in danger of looking at things in a superficial way and measuring them according to mere worldly standards; hence the aim of the true prophet or preacher is to awaken the conscience and to make men feel the need of divine help in fighting the battle of life. Our author's general theme is therefore one with which we can heartily sympathize, and no doubt readers who may be uncertain as to the meaning of details will catch the general drift. We can only hope that it may stimulate some to reflect more seriously upon the undoubted evils of lawlessness in society and shallowness in the Church. So much as to the general theme, as to details there is a certain carelessness, e.g., "most fools," Carlyle would say. This, of course, is the Thomas Carlyle referred to on page 58; perhaps the spelling, Cockneigh, is intentional, but it is not the general one, but rests upon a particular etymology of the word cockney. The treatment of the matter is desultory; a little more system and thoroughness would have done no harm. Conscience is certainly not opposed to the careful consecutive working out of a subject. In practical affairs, such as social corruption, conscienceless corporations, leniency to murderers, weak, sentimental theories, the strong denunciations scattered throughout the book may serve a good purpose; but statements such as "George is a fraud, etc.," "In spite of possible denial, Darwin's object in life was to underpin the negations in which he had been indoctrinated, and if possible by science, falsely so called, to knock the bottom out of the Sacred Scriptures," are not likely to help much in the discussion of great social and theological questions.

Mr. Thomas Christie, son of Dr. Christie, M.P., has been ill for some days in the Royal Victoria Hospital, suffering from an attack of appendicitis. Mr. Christie is reported as progressing favorably.