

LECTURES TO MY STUDENTS

you always do so? Do *you* always find it easy to escape from anxieties? Are *you* able to forget the sick wife and the ailing children at home? There is no doubt whatever that many come into the house of God loaded heavily with the thoughts of their daily avocations. The farmer recollects the fields that are to be ploughed or to be sown; it is a wet Sunday, and he is reflecting upon the yellow look of the young wheats. The merchant sees that dishonoured bill fluttering before his eyes, and the tradesman counts over his bad debts. I should not wonder if the colours of the ladies' ribbons and the creak of the gentlemen's boots, disturb many. There are troublesome flies about, you know: Beelzebub, the god of flies, takes care that wherever there is a gospel feast the guests should be worried with petty annoyances. Often mental mosquitoes sting the man while you are preaching to him, and he is thinking more of trifling distractions than of your discourse; is it so very wonderful that he does? You must drive the mosquitoes away, and secure your people's undistracted thoughts, turning them out of the channel in which they have been running six days into one suitable for the Sabbath. You must have sufficient leverage in your discourse and its subject to lift them right up from the earth to which they cleave, and to elevate them a little nearer heaven.

FREQUENTLY IT IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR CONGREGATIONS TO ATTEND, BECAUSE OF THE PLACE AND THE ATMOSPHERE. For instance, if the place is like this room at present, sealed against the pure air, with every window closed, they have enough to do to breathe, and cannot think of anything else: when people have inhaled over and over again the air which has been in other people's lungs, the whole machinery of life gets out of gear, and they are more likely to feel an aching head than a broken heart. The next best thing to the grace of God for a preacher is oxygen. Pray that the windows of heaven may be opened, but begin by opening the windows of your meeting-house. Look at many of our country places, and I am afraid our city chapels too, and you will find that the windows are not made to open. The modern barbarous style of building gives us no more ceiling than a barn, and no more openings for ventilation than would be found in an oriental dungeon, where the tyrant expected his prisoner to die by inches. What would we think of *a house* where the

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windows could not be opened? Would any of you hire such a dwelling? Yet Gothic architecture and silly pride make many persons renounce the wholesome sash window for little holes in the ceiling, or bird traps in the windows, and so places are made far less comfortable than Nebuchadnezzar's furnace was to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Provided all such chapels were properly insured, I could not pray for their preservation from fire. Even where the windows will open they are often kept closed by the month together, and from Sunday to Sunday the impure atmosphere is unchanged. This ought not to be endured. I know some people do not notice such things, and I have heard it remarked that foxes are not killed by the stench of their own holes; but I am not a fox, and bad air makes me dull, and my hearers dull too. A gust of fresh air through the building might be to the people the next best thing to the gospel itself; at least it would put them into a fit frame of mind to receive the truth. Take trouble on week days to remove the hindrance arising from foul air. In my former chapel, in Park Street, I mentioned to my deacons several times my opinion that the upper panes of the iron-framed windows had better be taken out, as the windows were not made to open. I mentioned this several times, and nothing came of it; but it providentially happened one Monday that somebody removed most of those panes in a masterly manner, almost as well as if they had been taken out by a glazier. There was considerable consternation, and much conjecture as to who had committed the crime, and I proposed that a reward of five pounds should be offered for the discovery of the offender, who when found should receive the amount as a present. The reward was not forthcoming, and therefore I have not felt it to be my duty to inform against the individual. I trust none of you will suspect *me*, for if you do I shall have to confess that I have walked with the stick which let the oxygen into that stifling structure.

SOMETIMES THE MANNERS OF OUR PEOPLE ARE INIMICAL TO ATTENTION; they are not in the habit of attending; they attend the chapel but do not attend to the preacher. They are accustomed to look round at every one who enters the place, and they come in at all times, sometimes with much stamping, squeaking of boots, and banging of doors. I was preaching once to a people who continually looked round, and I adopted the