

The Successful Meeting

Hints upon the Organization and Advertising of Church Events

BY GORDON V. THOMPSON.

WITH every new organization, concert, or meeting of any kind, the first question asked, is: "What is the best way to make it a success?" It is an undoubted fact that the majority of business enterprises, and, we are sorry to say, also those relating to church work, do not come up to the expectations entertained at the time of their conception, and what is the reason?

In order to assist those interested in work in connection with the Christian Church, the following suggestions are modestly submitted:

In the first place, in planning for a meeting of any nature, proper organization is essential. Jesus Christ Himself was a great organizer, and the results of His thorough work are now evident throughout the world. He took twelve men and trained every one of them, so that each became most useful in his special sphere. Paul, and the apostles, too, illustrate to us what can be accomplished by effective organization.

Secondly.—To be effective the organization should be as simple as possible. Wheels within wheels should be avoided. Simplicity is the key-note of most great inventions, and the same law that applies in this respect to mechanics also applies to the machinery necessary to produce a successful meeting or convention.

A good leader is required. By this is meant a man with executive ability, determination, dogged perseverance and common sense, combined with sufficient tact. He should know how to handle men, and should take a keen interest in the matter over which he is to have charge. Too often leadership is given to men who are not zealous for the cause.

The success of a meeting depends largely upon the leader, and he should be chosen only after careful and prayerful consideration.

Time is an important factor in the success or failure of a meeting. While some impromptu gatherings may appear to be successful, the meeting that is planned a month before is eminently more satisfactory. Time is necessary for preparation of speeches, advertising, etc., and time indeed means money to the poor society.

Probably the greatest condition of success is a high ideal. The meeting that is called simply for the vainglory of seeing a multitude assemble is a mistake. If it were not for the object of Christ's mission His splendid organization would soon have died. In every church meeting, the objective point should be Jesus Christ. If He is lifted up He promises to draw all men unto Himself. Let us do our share of the work, leaving the rest with Him. Then, if unsuccessful numerically and financially, we have the satisfaction of knowing that we have done our duty and that God's work cannot return void.

The Programme Committee should obtain the very best talent available. In order to be a successful salesman, a man must have confidence in his wares. To inspire the confidence of the people, it is necessary to feel that they will really miss something if they are absent. If they come once and go away satisfied they will probably come again and so reputation is established.

A good programme, like a good menu, must have plenty of variety, and not too much of the one thing. Plenty of bright, objective music should be interspersed between short addresses and readings.

Punctuality is another point to be remembered. The meeting that is advertised for "eight o'clock sharp" that is not called to order until half an hour later, creates a bad impression. Be prompt in opening the meeting and close at a reasonable hour. Secure a chairman who will "keep the ball rolling."

Do not have too much nonsense on the programme. Remember that "brevity is the soul of wit."

Keep expenses down. A great deal of money is often wasted by lack of business judgment and methods in church affairs. In the commercial world a business must have sufficient capital behind it or the institution goes under, but the church organizer has to get men to work, has to purchase

advertising matter, etc., and all with little or no money. His work is truly one of faith.

The writer does not believe in charging an admission fee to any church gathering. If money is needed, let it be given out of the abundance of the heart, and not squeezed out by means of a "ticket wringer." Collection plates placed near the door, will gather much silver, while they exclude no one who cannot afford an admission ticket. When a person pays a quarter for a ticket to a church concert, he often does not get his money's worth, while he is at the same time robbed of the satisfaction and blessing that accompanies a free-will offering.

Advertising is a supreme condition of success. In advertising a revival or other spiritual meeting, the question of expense should be one of secondary consideration. However, when the finances are limited, the question arises: "What is the best, cheap way to advertise?" Of course, the simplest and cheapest method is that done by the tongue. In fact, the great object of advertising is to make people talk about the article you wish given publicity. If that object can be accomplished without the aid of the printer, well and good. Have the meeting announced from the pulpit, in the Sunday School, everywhere possible. To give it particular emphasis, a good idea is to have some one with clear, distinct voice, announce the meeting from the pulpit or platform. People will afterwards say "Didn't Mr. Smith announce that concert well?" "What concert?" some one asks, and you see the result.

Another comparatively cheap form of advertising is the use of small printed tickets. The Fred Victor Mission which holds services in the Grand Opera, in Toronto, uses a ticket resembling the regular theatre ticket. The scheme works well. If it is understood that these tickets are necessary for admission, do not fail to collect them, or you lose the confidence of your patrons.

Printed programmes are excellent to arouse interest in the meeting, if the talent indicated is worthy. Posters and window cards placed in the right place will also attract attention. The hand-to-hand, or "button-hole" method is probably as effectual a method as any. Before the church services, picked men gather at each door and shake hands with every one that passes, giving him a personal invitation to be present. The announcement by the preacher will strengthen the impression.

Novelty is a great point in advertising. The "Be on Hand" cut shown in the ERA some months ago very likely produced good results. It was used with a few amendments in connection with a lecture on "Health," in Trinity church, and figured in the publicity campaign of the M.Y.M.A. Oratorical Contest. A large bulletin board was seen one day standing at the corner of two busy street thoroughfares. Across the top could be seen the word "Lost" in heavy black letters. On closer examination it was found that "a grand opportunity will be lost if you fail to be present at the closing concert, etc." This attracted many and cost little.

Spacing is another important feature. The man who wants too much on an ad. loses all the effect. The modern advertiser realizes that blank space is just as important in producing results as is the ink in making words. To emphasize a name or word, print it in bold, clear type and let it stand alone. Too much display is to be avoided. As a rule, only the two most important lines should be pre-eminently displayed. These should give the thought of the ad., and should be easily read at a distance. Do not use many different styles of type, as this is confusing to the eye and in bad taste.

In a word, have the advertising plain, pointed, novel and attractive. Remember that people will form their opinion of your meeting from your advertising, so have it done neatly and attractively. Poor printed matter is almost worse than none at all.

Concluding, we must say, that as the Divine Being is overruling everything, it is advisable to seek His guidance and sanction concerning every step. If your meeting has the proper object, you have the assurance that whatsoever is