

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY EPWORTH LEAGUE.

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AT the suggestion of the EPWORTH ERA, I recently visited Anno Domini 1980, to learn something of the future of the Epworth League. There are things "not lawful for a man to utter," and matters incomprehensible to the people of this age, and my most startling discoveries are therefore reserved, but I herewith present a few fragmentary notes of my observations.

Entering a handsome Methodist Church, whose very stones seemed to speak a welcome, and whose doors swung open automatically and silently as I approached, I was conscious of a genial social atmosphere that was like home-coming. After a sociable half-hour in the reception room, we passed into the Epworth Chapel to the Christian Endeavor meeting. I regret that I cannot adequately describe that meeting. The subject—one of a consecutive series—was, "Paul's Personal Experience of Temptation," and after a concise, suggestive definition by the leader (if leader he was), almost everyone present had some interesting question, remark, illustration or quotation to contribute. There was no order of service, no Bible reading, no exhortations to take part or to be brief, no haste, no hesitancy, no formality, no inattention. It was at once an earnest, reverent study and a frank and courteous conversation. One whom I took to be the pastor gave brief answers to a couple of difficult questions. An intense devotional spirit pervaded all, especially during the singing, which was very hearty, and included the *Te Deum* and two oratorio selections from Handel. But what amazed me most was the full and exact knowledge shown concerning Paul's life and letters. It was a revelation to me that the great apostle was so continuously and so sorely tried by temptations strangely similar to my own. I wished that I could meet them as he did.

The Epworth League of 1980 is more surely than ever a permanent and potent factor in church work and in the life of the community. It aims to uplift humanity by producing Christian character. Recent developments have greatly extended and diversified the work, and each League fully adapts itself to local needs, but, generally speaking, the weekly devotional meeting is still central. The Christian Endeavor department puts emphasis upon "Communion," but, like many other English words, this one has an expanded meaning—such a broad sense as Paul's usage illustrates. Close study is given to such themes as: Christian experience, its various phases and modes of manifestation in successive periods of history and in different temperaments and environments; the development of a true devotional life; the confirmation and enrichment of the experience of young Christians; the history of worship; the use and peril of stereotyped forms, etc.

The watchword of the Missionary department is "Stewardship." Though there is no longer any country in the world without its vernacular Scriptures and its native Christian church, yet there

is constant need of workers from Anglo-Saxon countries to train and aid the native ministers, and to inspire and lead great reformatory movements, and much genuine missionary work remains to be done.

About 1910 there was a great awakening in the Church on the subject of Christian stewardship in property, and about

studies, and the young people read only the best, chiefly the masters.

"Service" is the dominant note in the Social department. The abandonment of all money-raising devices and the revival of Christian home life many years ago modified the working of this department. At the same time the modernized Church architecture and enlarged League influ-

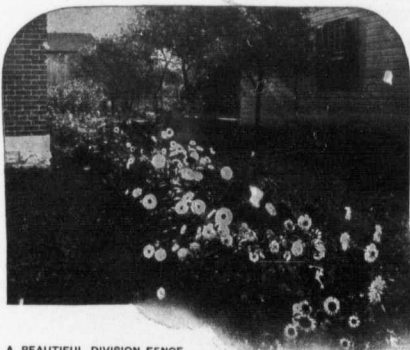


A GLIMPSE FROM A FACTORY WINDOW

Of What is Pronounced to be the Most Beautiful Street in the World, Size of Lots and Cost of Houses Considered.

the same time a powerful stimulus was given by the colleges and the press of America to the study of sociology from a religious and an international point of view. Thus the whole Church was stirred to realize the need of more aggressive evangelistic effort both at home and abroad. The Epworth League has been a mighty factor in these and other great movements.

ence with homeless and unchurched people opened further avenues of social service. The athletic clubs and other social organizations, which were once a menace to morals second only to the nineteenth century saloon (now happily obsolete), have been permeated with the salt of Christian character, and the popular amusements, though not under church



A BEAUTIFUL DIVISION FENCE

In the literary work of the League the motto is, "Inspiration," and thought and science are receiving much attention, and original work of high merit has brought some Leagues into prominence, yet the study of literature, especially Biblical literature, holds first place. Anglo-Saxon literature (we called it "English") also holds an honored place in League

management, are thus chastened and sweetened immeasurably.

To tell of the great things achieved by the Intermediate and Junior Epworth Leagues would require another chapter in the story.

Conventions are still held frequently, but they are generally local in character. On special occasions, when gatherings of