

A DANGER.

OURS is pre-eminently a social age. The multiplication of societies and of facilities for meeting in large numbers have led to a wonderful development in this line. The echoes of the immense Christian Endeavour Convention at Cleveland have not yet died away. Toronto has just welcomed and entertained the Baptists' Young People's Union of America, to the number of several thousands, and expects ere long to welcome and entertain another similar conference consisting of several thousand delegates. These large gatherings are the culmination of many smaller ones held for similar objects in the county, state or province. No doubt there are advantages of stimulus, inspiration, enthusiasm, momentum of Christian force obtained from such great assemblages, the sense of power, the visible display of numbers and strength. But it may be asked if there is not a danger of this sort of thing being carried too far, and if we have not now reached the danger point. Unfortunately the liability to abuse lurks in the best things, and that which is good can only be kept so at the price of eternal vigilance. Judging from what we read and hear, there appears to us to be no small danger of this convention-holding and convention-going becoming an end rather than a means, of their absorbing and monopolizing the energy and a large amount of the money which many will think might be more usefully spent in other ways. There is no small danger of the conventions and the manipulating them becoming a fad. Their immense numbers are now most obviously making them quite unwieldy. Forty thousand are claimed as having attended the Cleveland Convention, a number so large that it had to be divided up into half a dozen and sometimes a greater number of separate meetings. One cannot read the accounts of that convention without being struck with the tendency to glorification in the simple fact of great numbers. Numbers are important no doubt, but they do not of themselves furnish necessarily a matter for glorification, or an assurance of spiritual power, and there is a very real danger of this pride in numbers diverting attention from the real source of spiritual strength, life and success. The preparation necessary and the expense involved in making provision to accommodate and furnish ways and means to employ usefully the talent, energy and activity of such a host are enormous. No sooner is it announced where the next convention will be held, than the most elaborate means must be set in operation to provide for it, and the more so that every succeeding place is bound to overdo, if possible, all that has been done before. At Cleveland, for instance, committees general and special on all kinds of matters, requiring the thought and energy of some hundreds of persons, have been for a year past constantly at work for the convention of 1894. Thousands of dollars had to be collected and were expended upon the arrangements for it before a single delegate had set foot in Cleveland. Several hundreds of thousands of dollars must have been spent by delegates in going to, returning from and staying in the city during the convention. It is a pertinent question what now are likely to be the spiritual results, for the Christian Endeavor professes to exist for spiritual ends, as does also the Baptists' Young People's Union and many others of a like kind, what are the spiritual results of such a vast concourse of professedly Christian people? Do they at all correspond with, or compensate, in the way of extending and building up the kingdom of Christ, or promoting spiritual life in the individual soul, for the time, energy, thought, effort and money spent upon these conventions! Candidly, we question very seriously if they do, and it is a very grave matter if they do not. There is not a church which has not, at its Annual General Assembly, Conference, or Synod just held, had to lament a reduced income, very straitened resources, work hampered, servants underpaid or unpaid, honorable pecuniary engagements unmet, and here are thousands of Christian people belonging to these same churches, spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in a few days at a convention whose direct or indirect effects in promoting true religion ought to be very manifest indeed to justify such an outlay of time, effort and means. Frankly we question both the wisdom and the righteousness of such an outlay of money and time and effort, while the regular work of the churches to which convention-going Christians belong is in the state it now is for want of means.

But apart from the necessary and unavoidable expense connected with such huge gatherings, there is the tendency to run into a great many other kinds

of expense for purposes mainly of display and show, which it will be hard to justify, and which even appears childish or extravagant. All heads are not level and wise in even small societies, much less in such large ones, and it is beyond the power of the level and wise heads, and truly consecrated and single-hearted to prevent abuses, and unnecessary not to say foolish display. So now we have banners and bannerettes, badges and diplomas, and we know not how much trapping, machinery and display for which many can see no use whatever, that the effect of it all is to make people ask what is the meaning, or what is the use of all this? Is it necessary? What good end does it serve? If these things are not necessary, if they do not serve any good or sufficient end, then are they not worse than ridiculous? Badges and banners and decorations of one kind and another, judging from the Cleveland papers, were a very conspicuous feature of the Christian Endeavor Convention, and must have cost a very great outlay of time, labor and money, all given lovingly we doubt not; but the question still remains for Christian people, were these spent in the way best calculated to please and honor the Master and advance His cause? Such things were conspicuous by their absence at the inception and early gatherings of this society, now they may be numbered by the score, if not the hundred, and if they go on multiplying as they have been doing, what is the end going to be? To many on-lookers, even Christian on-lookers, these things appear not only unnecessary, but more or less foolish and childish, and are calculated both to turn away from it the sympathy and goodwill of many who would desire to show sympathy and goodwill, but to divert the attention of members from the really grand objects it has in view, and to substitute for them weak and beggarly elements. The distribution of such things should not be needed in any Christian society as a motive to work, and surely they are not needed or intended as rewards to this or that state or province for success over others in this or that kind of Christian effort. This is to give to the societies what they should most carefully avoid the very appearance of, namely, a worldly character and as actuated by appeals of a worldly kind.

We have probably said enough to indicate some directions in which it appears to many sincere and thoughtful Christians, there is danger to societies which originated with the purest motives, and for the noblest ends. Did one wish to be severe in his criticism it would not be difficult to notice the tendency to self-glorification, to a certain kind of bombast in reports and addresses, to use their power within the church at times unwarrantably, to censoriousness towards those whose idea of the manner of serving Christ in the best way, do not just fall in with the methods of this or that great wide-spread and powerful organization, and to undervalue those quiet, unobtrusive children of God, who live best to serve Him in those gentle, unseen ways which He particularly commends, but beyond the survey and methods of any of the societies whose great gatherings just now, especially, make such a noise in and monopolize to such an extent the attention of the world.

We have written thus because of sincere interest in and desire to promote the real welfare of the Christian Endeavor and like societies, because we are jealous of their good name. The mark of God's blessing has rested upon the first named, most manifestly in its wonderful success during its brief life. It evidently fills a place in the Christian church which no other form of Christian effort before its time has filled, and if it only continues true to, and keeps singly before its eye, those ends which led to its inception, it is calculated to do a work for the church, the cause of Christ and the world, that will greatly hasten, by the divine blessing, that day when the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, by raising up and sending forth a host of such consecrated, trained and qualified labourers as the world has never yet seen and the church has never yet sent forth.

WE have given this week much space to the account of the proceedings of the New Hebrides Mission Synod. It gives an interesting view of the Christian life and work carried on by our brethren in that far away field among the natives of these islands. We do not doubt that the account will be read with much interest by many of our readers, if for nothing else, for the work missionaries from our own church are doing there, and because that mission has been so prominently brought before us by the visit, such a short time ago of the veteran New Hebridean missionary, Rev. Dr. Paton.

Books and Magazines.

Among the articles which deserve special mention in *The Homiletic Review* for August are: "The Two-edged Sword in the Psalms," by Prof. Howard Osgood, and "The Causes and Care of Ministers' 'Blue Monday,'" by Arthur T. Pierson, D.D. The latter is especially practical and helpful. A noteworthy sermon is that on "Suicide," by Rev. C. W. Heisler, of Denver, Colorado. Another is that on "Natural Selection in the Spiritual World," by Rev. Charles R. Hunt, of Keota, Iowa. The Exegetical and Expository section contains an able article on "The Eschatology of the Book of Job," by Judge D. H. Bolles. Rev. B. F. Kidder continues his paper on Social Science and Comparative Religion, giving in this number, "Some Modern Aspects of the Holy City." The living issue is a treatment of the subject, "The Religious Forces of the United States," the statistics contained in which are obtained from Dr. H. K. Carroll's recent work on the same topic. Funk & Wagnalls Company, 30 Lafayette Place, New York City, \$3 per year.

The July number of *The Canadian Magazine* contains an interesting variety of articles, some of them of striking merit; the illustrations, too, are excellent. Walter Townsend's "The Supernatural in Macbeth" is a valuable and most readable addition to Shakespearean studies. "Three Years Among the Eskimos," by J. W. Tyrrell, the explorer, is well illustrated, excellently written, and full of most interesting information. "Papineau and his Home," by Thos. P. Gorman, is a timely illustrated article on the history and environments of that noted family. Hon. Donald MacInnes, Senator, contributes a copiously illustrated article on the Bahamas. The fourth of the series of articles, "In North-Western Wilds," by Wm. Ogilvie, F.R.G.S., deals with the exciting narrative of his journey from Fort Nelson, on the Liard, to St. John, on the Peace river,—a journey amid the grandest scenery, but full of danger. Other contributions of interest continue to make *The Canadian Magazine* well deserving of the heartiest support of Canadians. Published by the Ontario Publishing Co., Ltd., \$2.50 per annum.

The Church at Home, and Mission Work in Formosa is a reprint in pamphlet form, from the *Missionary Review of the World*, of addresses delivered by the Rev. G. L. MacKay, D.D., our missionary and the Moderator of the General Assembly, at Toronto, in February last. It is illustrated by four pictures which, to those who feel interested in Dr. MacKay and his work, are worth more than the fifteen cents which the whole pamphlet costs in single numbers, or \$7.50 per hundred. Many congregations could easily take a hundred and distribute them to good purpose. It is unnecessary to say that the pamphlet is replete with interest, information and a missionary spirit of burning ardor. Those who heard him deliver the addresses will never forget them. Of one of them the Rev. Dr. A. T. Pierson said, that in all his life he had only heard one that he would place before it. Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York and Toronto.

The Ladies' Home Journal for August. This number of this always attractive journal is well filled both with interesting reading matter and illustrations. It cannot but be popular wherever its merits are known as it combines use with beauty. "My First Snake" is by Max O'Rell, "Courtship and Marriage in Puritan Days," by Alice Morse Earle, gives some curious and interesting accounts of the difficulties of those very necessary things long ago. "Four Famous Young Authors" gives brief sketches, with portraits, of Richard Harding Davis, Rudyard Kipling, John Kendrick Bangs and Jerome K. Jerome. "A Whistling Evil" is what not only women but men too love, if well told, a love story. And so on it goes through a most interesting literary repertoire of grave and gay, but everything useful in its place and pure, wholesome and in good taste. The Curtis Publishing Company, Philadelphia, Penn., U.S.

The *Methodist Magazine* for August is a most excellent number, filled from its first page to its last with interesting, useful and readable matter, all presented in a style attractive to the eye, as well as to the literary faculty. Apart from shorter articles at the end, a few of the more important are, "A Rainy Day on Mount Hermon," by Lella Carman; "Over the Leaning Railway and through Syria," by the editor; "Mrs. Gladstone and her Good Works," by Mary S. Burnett; "A Colony of Mercy," by Kate T. Lover, with instalments of several continued stories. Our Methodist brethren are much to be congratulated upon their enterprise and the literary ability shown in getting up and keeping up so good a magazine month by month. William Briggs, Methodist Book Room, Toronto.

The July number of *The Pulpit* is a remarkably good issue, containing complete sermons by Rev. Dr. Noble, of Chicago, on "Faith and Works;" Rev. Dr. Stalker, of Glasgow, on "Abundant Life;" Rev. Dr. Gordon, of Boston, on "The Alternate Attributes;" Rev. W. L. Watkinson, of Liverpool, on "Keeping Up Appearances;" Rev. Dr. Lockwood, of Cincinnati, on "One Need, One Knowledge, One Purpose;" and Rev. Dr. Mitchell, of Buffalo, on "The Present Call for a Revival of American Patriotism," which is one of the best efforts of this well known preacher. *The Pulpit* gives every evidence of prosperity and at the reduced subscription price it certainly deserves it. \$1 a year; 10 cents a copy. Edwin Rose, Publisher, Buffalo, N. Y.

Woman's Work for Woman, for August, very aptly deals most largely with Christian work, and gives most information about Korea, now the scene of strife such as must seriously impede, if it does not altogether bring to a stand for a time, the work of the missionary. "Letters from the Front," are from Korea, Persia, China, Siam, India, Syria, Mexico and Columbia.

As the article of Rev. Dr. Jackson, published in last week's issue, has been somewhat abridged, we are pleased to say that, any minister of our church who may wish to have it in full, may do so by sending on a postal card, addressed to Rev. Dr. Jackson, Galt, Ont., a simple intimation of their wish for a copy.