

## What Our Young People Should Read

From a Paper at the Montreal Conference E. L. Convention, read by Miss Bessie Durand, Winchester, Ont.

THE subject, namely, "What our Young People Should Read" is a very broad and comprehensive one. One which is most important in this age of progress, and one which demands our immediate attention because of the results, that must be either for good or evil.

Never before has there been greater activity than at present among the American people to own and to read good books. This desire is not confined to any class, and it exists with almost the same intensity in the country as in the cities and towns. The reading habit has become almost universal, and the school days apparently stopping, when the child leaves school, extend far into the adult life of the individual. Home reading must furnish the essential basis for all the extended reading and education after one has finished the work in school and has entered upon that broader sphere of activity in the industrial, commercial or professional occupations of life.

In the earlier stages of life we can do much to mould the thoughts and lives of those who may be under our care, while at twenty-five we are told that our habits

tion must have a realization. And so I think it is to the interest of the mothers and the fathers to be so exceedingly interested that those whom they are caring for will have in their possession reading that will be most beneficial. It has been remarked that to broaden the life without despoiling it, is only to weaken it. So we must exercise the greatest care in our choice of reading, because even in this, happiness will come in striving, doing, loving, achieving, conquering always something positive and forceful.

A few contend that there is too much reading, that is the question that is suggested by the Librarians' Conference, which took place at Bournemouth. Bacon says that reading makes a full man, but it must be reading of the right kind. There is a vast amount of reading—some of it good and solid, but a great deal of it is shallow and does not really store the mind and mature it. We are told that more silence and more reflecting over what we do read is what we require.

So enormous is the number of good books in the world that it is beyond human possibility to know intimately more

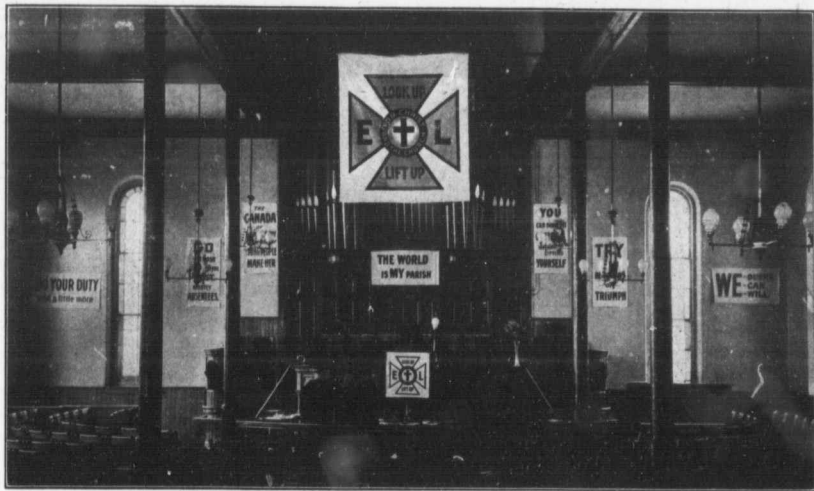
easier to look at a man's uniform than to talk with a man's soul."

Two sorts of people avoid reading; those with very little intelligence, and those possessing such unusual intelligence and originality, that their minds keep busy without external stimulus.

Rarely has a busy man or woman the time to peruse the whole of an author, however famous. Sometimes, too, many read just to be able to say that they have read. (The desire for attainments often outruns the reputation for attainments.) One young lady who said she had read Shakespeare was asked if she was familiar with Romeo and Juliet. She replied that she had often read Romeo, but that Juliet was somehow always out of the library when she called for it.

It is always well to make notes as we read. Some day after your notes have become a little voluminous, it will interest you to glance over them. You will be surprised at their richness, and nearly every item will appeal to you with greater zest than when you placed it there. Each that was more or less original at first, will now sweep your thought further on, while nearly every more registry of some one else's ideas will now compel your mind to bring up ideas out of its own depths.

Good books are like good compan-



CORNWALL METHODIST CHURCH, WHERE CONVENTION WAS HELD, OCTOBER 7 AND 8.

and characters are usually formed. The vital facts that concern each of us is the effect of the reading during those years when the minds are most receptive, and lasting impressions are made unconsciously. The setting of a standard is a most difficult task. Coleridge remarks: " 'Tis thine to celebrate the thoughts that make the life of Souls, the truths for whose sweet sake we to ourselves and to our God are dear."

This is a reading age, and Literature, we believe, is the greatest of the fine arts. Our young people will read, and it is our duty to see and guide that instinct in the right channels. It is no common, ordinary fact, but an ordinary common fact, that the young life is eager to know, and hence their knowledge must be self-satisfying. They anticipate, and this anticipa-

tion of a few of them. Emerson says: "It is easy to count the number of pages which a diligent man can read in a day, and the number of years which human life in favorable circumstances allows reading."

We shall discover that there is required for reading, not time alone, but *method*. It was Samuel Johnston who once said that "reading with care one hour daily would make a man learned in five years." Temple Scott in his introduction to "The Friendship of Books" remarked, "we tumble over each other to get a glimpse of a commonplace man, riding on horseback, because he is said to be King of a country, or a great Captain of Industry, but when a real King of men sits with us at home we take the first opportunity to get out of his way. I suppose it is much

Jones; they have an effect on our lives and characters. Undoubtedly the first book is the Books of Books—the Bible. It must be read, not hurriedly, or haphazardly, but regularly, prayerfully and systematically. "Read your Bible," said Ruskin, in addressing the students at Oxford; "make it the first morning business of your life to understand some portion of it clearly, and make it your business to obey it in all you do understand. To my early knowledge of the Bible I owe the best part of my taste for literature, and the most precious, and on the whole the one essential of my education. The Rev. E. F. Copley tells us that no one can give more than he receives, and so life's task *first* of all is to gather, to learn to pile high with eager hand the treasure within.