

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE EPWORTH LEAGUE.

THE story of the origin of the Epworth League has been told so frequently that it is not necessary to occupy much space with it. It is well known that the League was organized on May 15th, 1889, in the City of Cleveland, by the amalgamation of five young people's societies which had existed for some years in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Many difficulties opposed themselves to the union of these societies, but by prayer, discussion, and compromise an agreement was at last reached. The beautiful Epworth Memorial church has been erected on the spot to commemorate the happy consummation. The new society "caught on," from the very first, and increased in numbers with amazing rapidity. In Canada the history of the League dates from October, 1889, when it was launched at a great meeting held in the Metropolitan church, Toronto, called together largely through the influence of Rev. Dr. Withrow. The first League was organized in Barrie, by Rev. R. N. Burns, which is still in a flourishing condition.

Previous to the introduction of the League, young people's organizations of various kinds existed in the Methodist Church, quite a number being societies of Christian Endeavor. The members of the latter were naturally greatly attached to this interdenominational movement, and many were not willing to surrender in favor of the Epworth League. A happy way out of the difficulty was suggested by Rev. A. M. Phillips, who proposed that our societies which chose to do so might become Epworth Leagues of Christian Endeavor, thus being in harmony with the denominational organization, and at the same time in hearty fellowship with the interdenominational. The arrangement could not be expected to be carried out without some little friction in places, but on the whole it has worked well.

By reference to the figures published on another page it will be seen that the development of the League has been steady and constant. Every year has witnessed a gratifying increase in numbers, and in practical usefulness, until we now have nearly 2000 societies and more than 80,000 members, which, of course, includes Epworth Leagues, Epworth Leagues of Christian Endeavor, and

Junior Societies. Although not intended for money raising purposes, these societies last year collected for various church benevolences over \$50,000.

The four departments of the League provide for the development of our young people's talents in various directions. The culture of the heart life is the purpose of the consecration service and the weekly prayer meeting, which are generally looked upon as the essential features of the organization. It is pleasing to be able to state that the majority of our societies report that these distinctively spiritual services are better attended than any others, thus effectually disproving the oft repeated statement that the tendency is in the direction of mere entertainment.

Provision is made for intellectual training in the Literary department, with its Bible study, and Reading Course. The diagrams on another page will show the

A NEW FORCE.

BY REV. A. M. PHILLIPS, B.D.*

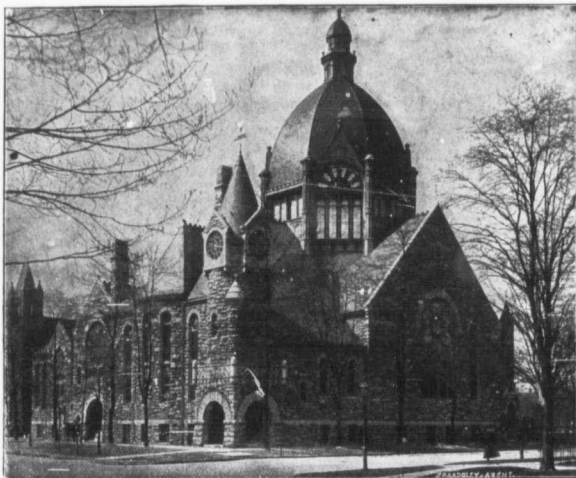
THE Epworth League is the organized application of a new force to the Methodist machinery of our day, and destined to render valuable assistance to the Church in accomplishing her divine mission in the world. This new movement is not foreign to the historic genius of Methodism, but in perfect harmony with her origin. It should be remembered that the "Holy Club," from which was generated that great revival of spiritual and experimental Christianity known as Methodism, was an organized band of young men. These young men were bound together by rigid rules for four things: more Bible knowledge, more literary culture, more personal piety, more practical service. Methodism was in its beginnings pre-eminently a young man's movement. Its first achievements resulted from the enthusiasm of consecrated young men.

The Methodist Church in all her history has been not only the Church of the masses, but of the young people. Her great successes may be largely attributed to a constant infusion of young blood into her ranks. The Epworth League is a reproduction of the spirit and purpose of the "Holy Club," of 1729-37. The four things aimed at by these original "Methodists" are the four things aimed at by the young Methodism of this continent, banded together in the

Epworth League. It is a revivification of the Oxford brotherhood of a century and a half ago, clothing it in the habiliments of the nineteenth century, and sending it forth to work with the methods of this practical age. In our Canadian Epworth League constitution, with its four departments of Christian Endeavor, Religious Work, Literary Work, and Social Work, we believe that we have most nearly attained the ideal aim of those four young men who constituted the original Holy Club.

We dare to pronounce it the best system of organization for Christian young people yet provided. It avoids one-sided culture and provides for the symmetrical development of the whole man. Our

* This article was written by Brother Phillips in 1891. As a prophetic utterance it is particularly interesting to place alongside of Dr. Withrow's contribution written a few days ago.



EPWORTH MEMORIAL CHURCH, CLEVELAND, OHIO.
ERECTED ON THE SPOT WHERE THE EPWORTH LEAGUE WAS ORGANIZED.

wonderful record of our Reading Course for the past four years. The aggressive work of the League has been pushed to such an extent that we now have two full-fledged "Forward Movements"—one for evangelistic work, and the other for missionary expansion—each of which has been a gratifying success.

Looking upon the record of the past ten years as a whole we have every reason to "thank God and take courage."

ADMIRAL FARRAGUT had for his motto the words, "The best defence against the guns of the enemy is a well-directed fire." This is an equally true and valuable motto in spiritual matters. The best shield against temptation to do evil is to be constantly employed in doing good. Cold water will freeze more quickly than that which is boiling, for there is less heat to overcome.—*Lookout.*