

# THE LEAGUE IS DEAD

At least, some people say it is. Perhaps that is not just the same thing, but if the wish is father to the thought, and as such people are concerned, the League had better go and die. But somehow or other it is hardly willing to attend its own funeral, and even its severest critics have to acknowledge that it almost threatens to live despite their prognostications of its speedy demise. I heard a minister remark not long ago just what appears at the heading of this article, and so I told some young folk of my acquaintance, as dolefully as I could, "The League is dead." One quite lively young Leaguer asked, "Who says so?" And I had to tell him, "The doctor." "Oh well, he ought to know, I suppose." Was the rejoinder, and then I recalled this story: "An Irishman was considered dead; he had been so pronounced by the physician, and his friends took the verdict as final and conclusive. A wake was to be held, and the friends of the dead man gathered to celebrate the occasion. The corpse was well laid out, and the exercises commenced with doleful gloom. The surprise of the company was great indeed when the dead man raised himself on his elbow, and looking around on the guests, asked, 'Phat's the matter?' 'You're dead,' was the reply. 'I'm not dead,' he indignantly rejoined. 'Sure you are dead,' he was again told, and to settle the matter the additional news was tendered him, 'The docter says you are dead, and shure he ought to know. Lie down, now, you're dead!'" But it took more than the doctor's judgment to convince the "dead" man, and he soon demonstrated that he was very much alive. That is about the way it goes with the Epworth League. It has been pronounced dead, but in some way or another it proves itself alive, and better still, likely to live to a hoary old age.

## WHO WANTS THE LEAGUE TO DIE?

Surely not the ministers! Well, to be strictly honest, it seems sometimes that some of them do. There are plenty of people in the Methodist Church that seem quite willing to testify that their minister has tried to kill it. Not all, mind. By no means. Many a minister in the church to-day could testify to the helpful formative influences of the League on his own youth. Others cheerfully testify to the wholesome influences of the League on their own minds and hearts, and many of them are among the staunchest friends of the League. But too many instances have occurred lately to make me doubt the sad fact that not a few ministers would rather like to say a fond farewell at the obsequies of their League. It is painfully evident to my mind that some Leaguers are struggling along seeking a larger life for themselves and the constituency they aim to lead against indifference, criticism, or thinly veiled opposition of the minister. When a man is forever absent from the meeting of his Leaguers, when he seeks excuse after excuse, apparently, for his neglect; when he complains of the drag the League is on his time or attention; when he considers the time spent in the League as an evening wasted; when he covertly seeks the extinction of the League; when in a score of different ways he shows his heartfelt desire that it were wholly inoperative, is it to be wondered at that his young people write sadly about him to the General Secretary? More than one letter has reached me recently like the one from which the following is a correct extract: ". . . But I must say our

young people always seem to be ready and willing to do their part when called on and encouraged. . . . I do not wish to complain or find fault, but as far as I can see our present pastor does not appear to take the interest in the young people or in the work of the church outside of preaching, that we think, as our leader, he should. . . . I must say he preaches excellent sermons, but owing to circumstances there does not seem to be much reality in what he says, and many have lost confidence in him. Quite a number have practically lost interest and do not attend the services regularly, some not at all. . . . For want of tact, or something, our pastor has gone so far as to criticize the prayers of the people, and the sincere efforts of the young people openly in meeting; which is very discouraging, and has had a serious effect. . . . This is enough; too much. It hurts me to write it more than it does you to read it; but there is the fact, stated in answer to an enquiry of mine as to the state and prospects of the work in the case under consideration. I would God for the faithful and trusting men who realize their obligations as undershepherds of the flock of Christ, and who are honestly endeavoring to lead their young folk into higher life and wider usefulness; but surely a woe rests over those, whoever they are, who show no certain anxiety to save the flock from the fangs of the destroyer. Yes, and am afraid that there are some ministers even who wish the League dead.

## IF THE LEAGUE WERE DEAD, WHAT?

Would the problem of the young people of the Methodist Church be any less important? In such places where nothing at all has taken the place of a defunct League, (for there are some such,) or in those where some irresponsible and vagrant compromise has been allowed to take the place of the League, (for there are such places too,) have the young folk been better looked after or more profitably led? Experience says No! Supposing for a moment that the League were to die, with what would you supplant it? What form of organization will take its place or do its work? For there can be no two opinions as to the purpose of the League, nor as to the necessity of doing somehow what it was created to do among the growing youth of our Church. Were the League dead beyond all cavil, the burning question of the hour would still be "What are we going to do with the young people of the Church?" Mark my proposition. It is "with" not "for." The Church surely has learned before now, that it is not enough to do something for its growing boys and girls, its youths and maidens. Young people need more than to have something done for them. They are active, willing, busy creatures; wanting to do something all the time, and doing it. If they do it not for God, still they keep doing. Who profits by the result? No. It is not enough that the Church shall gather them together on Sundays to listen to sermons or even to study Bible passages. There are six intervening days between Sundays, and during perhaps a full hundred hours every week, the natural activities of a normal boy or girl are active. Tell them to "Be good!" Oh, yes! But show them how to be what Thoreau said was a great deal better, how to be good for something. That's what the League is for. Kill it, bury it, pronounce it gone forever, and still you have the young people on your hands. Mark it well, the problem of the Epworth League is not

the problem of its own organization, but that of the whole body of Methodist young people, and as long as the Church has them, and God grant that she may never weaken for lack of them, that problem will not down, but shall confront us every day and everywhere. Mr. Man, you would like to see the League dead, what are you going to put in its place? You must make adequate provision for your youth or rob the Church and the Country of the most valuable asset the Creator ever brought into being. Until something better than the Epworth League is in the Providence of God evolved to make better Methodists and more efficient workers for His Kingdom's extension throughout the world, for your own sake Mr. Man, for the sake of the young folk whom God has committed to you, and for the sake of the Christ who said "Feed my sheep," don't "knock" the Epworth League but work it, and remember what Thoreau said again, "The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run." Judged by this criterion, how much does the Epworth League cost you? How much "of what I will call life" have you given into it? Has your service been given grudgingly, complainingly, or slothfully? Then no wonder you never got much out of it. Put "what I call life" into it! Whether it be Pastor, President, or any other officer, whether it be for the leadership of a meeting, the Chairmanship of a Committee, or the performance of any of the less prominent duties of the League, what is needed is, LIFE, LIFE. Yes, it is absolutely true in this regard also, "He that loseth his life shall find it." Thank God, the League is not dead, nor likely to die, and despite the minority who would like to create its demise, there is a growing conviction in the minds of the majority that the mission of the Epworth League, instead of being nearly ended, is only well begun. I am a very poor prophet indeed and wholly unable to "discern the signs of the times," if the Epworth League is not on the eve of a grand renewal of the strength of its youth about to show forth a more abundant life than its critics ever credited it with. Believe me, it will be a long, long time before grape and flowers are in order for the Epworth League's funeral. Long live the League!

## Lanterns and Slides

We are banking orders for the use of our lantern outfits for the coming season. You will be wise in placing your order early. Our only aim is to do for your League in other departments of work what the Forward Movement has done in missionary lines. We are prepared to provide your society or school with a splendid variety of Travel Talks and Literary Evenings that cannot fail to please, at the lowest possible expense to you. And if you decide to purchase a lantern, the agency of this office is freely at your disposal, and the General Secretary may save you many dollars and some disappointment in your purchase if you write him concerning the matter. His only condition is that your purchase is for church work, not for personal gain.

Mrs. O'Hara: "It's the ligant job me man" has 'ow, Mrs. McClune. "Tis a night watchman he is, like a bett'." "An' why do ye like that bett' than the other, Mrs. O'Hara?" "Why, sure, he sleeps all day and that saves his board; and he works all night, and that saves his lodging."—*Es.*