

THE EPWORTH LEAGUE.

It has passed into a truism that the religious training of its young people is the most important duty of the Church. These are especially, by the providence of God, committed to its care. These are, in the most emphatic sense, the hope of the Church and of the world. Methodism, in both the old world and the new, by means of its admirable Sunday-school system, has done her full share in training the young generations in religious knowledge and duty. She is now preparing to step out into the still wider field, that of following up these young people as they attain the years of adolescence, of finding the missing link between the school and the Church, and of promoting the development of all their faculties under Christian auspices. She is seeking, first of all and most of all, the cultivation among her young people of personal piety. She then seeks the organizing and training of the young life of Methodism in practical Christian effort, in intelligent acquaintance, and deep sympathy, and active co-operation with its great enterprises of evangelistic and missionary work. She seeks, thirdly, to promote their intellectual culture—to make them better acquainted, first of all, with that grandest book in the universe, the Word of God—to study it as a whole; to study it in the relations of its various parts; to know when, where, why, by whom, and for whom, were written its different books. She seeks to make them better acquainted with the providential dealings of God with the race as recorded on the page of history; especially of the history of the great religious movements of the ages; and most of all, as recorded in the soul-stirring story of the great revival called Methodism—to make them familiar with its noble traditions, and to bring them into sympathy with its religious spirit.

Nor does this movement overlook the social and æsthetic natures of

the young. All that can elevate the taste, all that can ennoble the character, all that can dignify the life—whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report—these things she seeks to cultivate and promote as the noblest heritage our young people can possess.

Such are, in brief, the aims and objects of the new social and religious movement known as the "Epworth League." Like most things in Methodism, it is a growth, a development—the adaptation of new means to a pressing need. For some years the Methodism of this continent has been feeling its way to such an organization. In the affiliated Methodism of the neighbouring Republic they have had their local and sporadic associations—the Church Lyceum, the Christian Alliance, the Methodist Young People's Alliance, the Oxford League, the Chautauqua Movement, and other associations. But none of these seemed to be sufficiently broad, sufficiently flexible, sufficiently vital in its organization, to meet the varied needs and varied circumstances of societies in town and country, in the east and west, in the north and south. At length, last May, these various associations met, through their representatives, in the city of Cleveland, and mutually agreed to disband and to reorganize as a united society—The Epworth League. The success of the League has been phenomenal. Since the month of May over 1,300 branches have been formed, some with a membership of 400, and that during a period of the year least favourable for such work. The utmost enthusiasm has been manifested, and the most beneficial practical results have been realized. The vast possibilities of the movement led Bishop Newman to designate it one of the most important movements of modern Methodism. It is taking hold of the young life of the Church and consecrating it to Christian culture