

## A Plea for the Practical

A friend writing very recently refers to certain Convention addresses and says: "I have repeatedly heard workers say, 'If they would only tell us *how* to make our work successful under existing circumstances.'" The desire is natural, but one might well reply, "Who can know 'existing circumstances' like the very people who are living within them?" No outside person, no matter how wise he may be, can write a prescription for all mankind, but he can write the peculiar to the neighborhood of which he knows practically nothing. That is why the average convention address so often fails. The speaker comes along with theories that may be perfectly sound and practicable somewhere, but not so at that particular place. The local Institute idea is based on examination of not only general principles but on a first-hand study of the needs of the neighborhood. All communities have some things in common, and yet all differ in important particulars and must be made the subject of close personal study and investigation. In every district in our Church these Institutes may be held, not conducted by outside workers exclusively, but by local workers particularly. Every District League in its annual convention should do much of this definite enquiry work. Less time spent in papers and addresses of general interest and a more intensive study of the local needs of the various communities included on the district would result in more practical results. In the last analysis of this whole matter, the local workers themselves must study the situation and find out the "how" of methods. I am asked some times to solve problems of purely local character and of which I cannot possibly know the facts and details, and am sometimes misunderstood because I decline to write the prescription that is expected to magically cure the existing ills. The only truly scientific way is for the local leaders to faithfully study their own peculiar needs and, knowing them, to adapt the principles that apply in the case to the working out of the problems involved. That is why it is absolutely essential to permanently successful work for the Executive Committee of each League to hold regular and thorough-going business meetings. You must "work out your own salvation."

## Look Around You!

"I do wish the good Lord would show me something to do," were the words I heard him say, and in saying them he was quite sincere. But he was mistaken in his wish. I think the good Lord has given us all eyes to see for the very purpose of discovering ways of serving others, and by so doing glorifying Him, and we need hardly expect Him to take any miraculous or even exceptional means of pointing out to us things to do. Look around you. There are many avenues of Christian service open and waiting for your ministry—old people to be comforted, sick people to be cheered, poor people to be helped, erring ones to be recalled, little children to be guided,—dear me, no one can make inventory of the ways in which the open-eyed servant of Christ can follow. His example and go about "doing good." What is the trouble then? Mainly two-fold, I fancy. First, too many of us think that we have done our religious duty faithfully when we have attended the church services and supported its philanthropies and secondly, a whole lot of us are waiting for "something big" to open up before us. Going to church and contributing to its benevolences are good acts, but they are not the kind deeds for which the Master bleeds. Not less church going helps, but more personal ministry between church services, is what is most needed

to exemplify the Christ spirit in the world. The young disciple who imitates the Christ activities to the services that are carried on within church walls and neglects the service that ought to be carried on outside those walls, is not likely to grow in either grace or goodness. For the test of goodness is not in saying prayers, singing hymns, or attending church meetings of any kind; but is in carrying the spirit that prayer, praise and worship should engender within the soul, into action in the outer world where the great need lies. Look around you, therefore, and find work in plenty to do for "the good Lord," who has given you eyes to see.

## Principles of Training

It may be well to give a restatement of these as I found them years ago in that admirable book, "The Children for Christ," by Rev. Andrew Murray. The frequent use of this book has been a great boon to me personally, and I am sure that every parent, pastor, teacher and leader of children would profit by its study. In one of his notes at the end of the book, Mr. Murray enumerates the following six principles, all of which should be observed in our Junior Epworth League work.

1. "Training is more than teaching. Teaching makes a child know and understand what he is to do; training influences him, and sees that he does it. Teaching deals with his mind; training, with his will.

2. "Prevention is better than cure. Not to watch and correct mistakes, but to watch and prevent mistakes, is true training. To lead the child to know that he can obey and do right, that he can do it easily and successfully, and to delight in doing it, is the highest aim of training.

3. "Habits must precede principles. The body is formed and grows for the first years of life, while the mind is to a great extent dormant. Habits influence the person, by giving a certain bent and direction, by making the performance of certain acts easy and natural, and thus preparing the way for obedience from principle.

4. "The cultivation of the feelings precedes that of the judgment. The early years of childhood are marked by the liveliness of the feelings and the susceptibility of impressions. The parent seeks to create a feeling favorable to the good, to make it attractive and desirable. Without this, habits will have little value; with it, they have a connecting link by which they enter and grow into the will.

5. "Example is better than precept. Not in what we say and teach, but in what we are and do, lies the power of training. Not as we think an ideal to train our children for, but as we live do we train them. Not our wishes or our theory, but our will and our practice, count. It is by living a thing that we prove that we love it, that we have it, and that we influence the young mind to love it, and to have it too.

6. "Love that draws is more than law that demands. To train, needs a life of self-sacrifice, of love that seeketh not its own, but lives and gives itself for the object. For this God has given the wonderful mother-love: it needs but to be directed into the right channel as the handmaid of God's redeeming love. Law alone always works sin and wrath. It is love that gives itself with its thought and strength to live for and in the other, and breathes its own stronger and better life into the weaker one. Love inspires, and it is inspiration that is the secret of training."

The last nine italicized words above, are most important for the Junior League

superintendent. Not so much to teach lessons out of books, as to inspire the young soul to reach up into and develop the higher qualities of life, is the chief end and aim of Junior League training. Not mainly to know even Bible truth, but to accept it as the constructive power in the upbuilding of character; to love it as the most precious of truths that a human soul can possess; to practise it as a daily habit of personal action;—these constitute the essential purpose of Junior League education. A thorough knowledge of the six principles enumerated, and their practical observance by all who are seeking to train the children for Christ, would greatly simplify and strengthen our Junior League operations.

## "If"

"If I only had your chance. . . ." The words reached me as I passed a small group of young people who evidently were freely conversing about affairs of mutual interest. What the immediate reference was to I do not know, but the exclamation was suggestive of many things. I had as much time as you have, "if I only had as much time as you have," "if I were in your place," "if I had more money," and so on and on the lament runs, until one would think that the poor speaker were beggared of all opportunity and privilege. The greater part of such lamentation is utterly useless and vain. No two of us are situated exactly alike, neither have we just the same native talent or temporal advantage; but not to worry over what one has not, but to make the best of what one has, is life's truest philosophy. I was recently speaking with a dear lady who has been young for years, but afflicted with asthma, and she greatly helped me by the suggestion that while she was subject to considerable suffering, there were so many in worse plight that she by comparison had only cause for thanksgiving. I thought that all depends on the view-point we take in looking at ourselves in contrast with others. There are some above us, but more below us in privilege and possession of life's most desirable things. Rather compare one's state with the latter than with the former. And instead of repining that we are not right up among the leaders, let us follow them, and in turn become leaders of others who may still be behind us in the matter of life achievement. Do not wall because you have not somebody else's "chance," but compel your own to minister to you to the best advantage. Rail not at others because you have not their "time," or "money," or "place," or "talent"; but use all the time you have wisely, invest both talent and money to best advantage and for greatest permanent gain. Use all you have for increase, and as the days go by you will not repine because of neglect or misuse of life's passing opportunities. Abundance awaits the faithful in all branches of human endeavor. Look out for "If."

Written in the East, these characters live forever in the West; written in one province, they permeate the world; needed in rude times, they are prized more and more as civilization advances; product of antiquity, they come home to the business and bosoms of men, women, and children in the modern days. Then is it any exaggeration to say that the "characters of Scripture are a marvel of the mind?"—Robert Louis Stevenson.