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EDITORIAL

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The Church and Young Men

YOUNG men were never more highly valued than to-day. The demand for them was never greater than now. Everywhere the call is for young men of superior qualifications, well trained and efficient. Super-excellent men are in requisition in all departments of commercial, mechanical, and professional activity. Positions of great trust are committed to them. Works of exceeding magnitude are under their superintendency. Immense responsibilities rest upon them. No longer are places of commanding influence occupied exclusively by men of ripe age and extended experience. There have always been a few great outstanding young men in the forefront of human activity, but never before have men in early manhood constituted such a large proportion of the world's foremost leaders in every sphere of public enterprise.

The call for men of youth and superior parts is heard also in the church. Men of excellence were never more needed for usefulness in the work of God. But the number of young men enlisted in religious activities is far too small, and on every side is heard the lament that the church fails to effectively influence and grip the youth of the nation. That there is a large measure of truth in this will be admitted by all.

The church should have at least a majority of the young men enrolled in its activities. For their own sakes they need the church. For its own sake the church needs them. But the majority of young men are outside the direct, immediate, individual influence of the church. They do not even attend its public services with regularity.

With young women it is different. The proportion of young women to young men in our churches as a whole, is we suppose about three to one. Young women more quickly respond to the claims of religion when presented to them than young men do. Is this because the heroic element in much of the preaching and practice of the average church of to-day, is lacking? Are we presenting an effeminate type of Christianity that fails to arouse the masculine conscience and awaken the ready obedience of the strong man's will? We have not more young women than can be well utilized in work for God, but we have far too few young men. And in saying this we are not disparaging the young women. Much of the work of the church in years gone by was performed by their loving and faithful ministries, more is being done by them to-day, there will always be pressing need for their services, but more and more effective work could be done had we an increased host of young men in the working forces of the church. Men are needed for labors that women cannot perform. There is much to be done that must remain unaccomplished unless men do it. It is for these that we must seek, and never rest until they are enrolled among the toilers of the Lord's harvest-field.

Why are young men lacking in the church? Have they lost confidence in it? Or have they little faith in its officiating clergy? The former may be in some degree true and yet we believe that the average young man has in his innermost heart a deep respect for the church. The latter, we fear, is the fact regarding many young men and many preachers. Young men demand a practical, positive, workable religion. The majority of them care but little for finely spun theories or philosophical dissertations on religious topics that are often of too speculative or visionary a type to help them in the actual struggle of every-day experience with self and sin, the world and the

devil. Pointless homilies and diluted ethical essays do not arouse them. Neither do they appreciate a sentimental style of appeal that fails to awaken and stir the inner purposes of the soul to mighty enterprise. Never was the sniffling, snivelling exhortation of the emotional pietist so little valued as to-day. And to present a Christ that does not quicken all the virile strength of the stoutest nature to action, is to do both Him and it grave injustice. Never before was it so loudly demanded that the preacher must be a man's man. In himself, in his dress, in his manner, in his preaching, in his fellowship, in all his work, the preacher must be first a man, and must go after men as a man if he would win and hold those most valuable and needed in the work of the church. A preacher who knows the men of his congregation only in a professional way on Sunday, will have little influence over them between Sundays, and will soon lose them from the services of the Lord's house. He must know them at their work, in places of business and daily toil, on the street, always and everywhere, if he would win them for his Master. "That's three times I've been introduced to the doctor," said a young man to his mother when telling her of how he had met the pastor when in company with a prominent church official and the minister had failed to recognize him. What hold can such a preacher have on a young man like that? "He doesn't know me in my working clothes," a toil-stained blacksmith once remarked to the writer as together we met the minister on the street. These may be exceptional cases, but we fear they might be indefinitely multiplied. Of one of the most popular and influential preachers in Canada we were quite recently told, "He will go out early in the mornings apparently for a walk, that he may drop in with some young fellow he is after, and chat with him as he is on his way to shop, foundry, office or store." Little wonder that there is no lack of young men in his church. "Where are you worshipping now?" we asked a young man who had been in the city but a few months and whose parents in the little home town we knew were anxious about their boy. "I go to Dr. —'s church," said he. "How is that? It is a long way from your boarding-house." "Yes," was his reply, "but he looked me up and I like him because he always knows me and I am right at home over there." That was sufficient explanation and told the whole story. The preacher must be a man, must know men, must be a man among men, and win men by the very strength and magnetism of his manhood. Representative of the mightiest Man the world ever knew, he must go where men are, study what men need, and above all, supply that need by the Gospel of the Son of God, without which no one can either be a man or act a true man's part in the stress and strain of this toiling, struggling, sin-stained old world.

The older church officials must countenance youth and co-operate with the pastor to win young men. The pastor can do much alone, but unaided he cannot do all. Where his labors among men are followed up by a hearty and cordial welcome to them by leading laymen of the congregation, a congenial and happy church home may be made for the incoming youth. But it must be a home, not a hospital or a reformatory. It is wholesome, helpful fellowship and wise leadership by tactful elders that young men most need. They are not looking for either patronage or favors. They want a place to live as part of