

A NOTABLE TESTIMONY

"I had no books but a Bible, for which I am now most grateful, because I read that great old book—literature in itself—through and through, from end to end, I know not how many times. And although I know I had not the smallest devotional intent, I am sure that the very fact of saturating myself with a well of English unadorned with the very greatest service to me."—Frank T. Bullen, in "The Sog of a Sea Wolf."

THESE are remarkable words. They are taken from a most attractive book, and give the striking experience of a man who has attained a high position in the literary world. Ruthlessly flung out upon his own resources in childhood, and compelled by sheer force of adverse circumstances to write a bare living from the cruel clutches of an unfriendly world, the boy who started life on London streets with positively no prospects of success and absolutely no thought of renown, has become a distinguished Christian, an accomplished gentleman, and a famous author. And the underlying secret of it all he gives in the words contained in the extract given above.

Let all our young friends read and ponder his testimony. None of them will have to face anything like the difficulties that confronted young Bullen in his early struggles for a living, but all of them may prove, as he did, the supreme value of the Bible in the development of a life.

These are days when books are multiplied almost beyond number, and few young people need now deplore their utter poverty in the ownership of varied reading matter, as young Bullen was forced to do. Indeed, instead of it being a case of "no books," it is more frequently one of too many books. And instead of its being "no books but a Bible," it is too often all books except the Bible, that constitute the actual reading of the young.

There are Bibles innumerable, of course, and the majority of our young folk own a copy, but it is the Bible as a book actually read that is lacking. Do you doubt this? Then be honest and take a minute to calculate just how much time you consume in reading the book yourself. Must we not all confess that it is altogether too small a period? How many of us really give the Bible a fair chance to show what it can do for a constant reader? For that is the one great need—to read it much—until one is, to use Bullen's word, fairly "saturating" oneself with its contents.

To read it "through and through, from end to end," as untutored young Bullen did, is not the best way, nor is it the way he would advise young people to take to-day; but even if it is infinitely better than not reading it at all, or than reading it at best in a very indifferent and thoughtless manner. If our youth only realized that the greatest short stories in all literature are Bible stories, and if they set themselves systematically to an intelligent mastery of them, they would not long find Bible reading dull or uninteresting. Nothing can be more stimulating to a well-meaning youth than the grand old hero stories of the Old Testament, yet these are known only superficially, and usually as the result of some bygone Sunday School lesson, or the memory of childhood's hours when godly men simply told them to her little ones.

One cannot but regret the flood of

fanciful and unreal stories that literally inundate our homes, in the ceaseless flow of light periodical literature that characterizes the literary world to-day, and all thinking persons will wish for its cessation. Yet in the midst of it all many parents seem wholly indifferent to what their children read, and many young people who should have some faculty of discrimination, seem content to read without choosing, the first thing that comes to hand, with an unhealthy craving for the very latest book, magazine, or paper.

And in it all, what place has the Bible? We do not mean as the Sunday School text-book, nor as the preacher's compendium of texts, nor as a beautiful gift-book, but as the every-day reading book of the people. Given a fair chance, the Bible will demonstrate its constructive

power for character in every constant reader, and its influence for the upbuilding of the highest type of manhood will be as clearly proven to any boy who reads it to-day as it was to the "sea wolf" whose indubitable testimony we have quoted above.

We do not advise our young friends to read nothing but the Bible. That would be foolish. But we do want to compel their attention to the incomparable beauty of its pages, and to have them prove for themselves its supreme power in both mental and spiritual growth. We hope that our Weekly Topics for both the First and Third Departments of the League, during the coming year, will help our Leaguers know the Bible better and love its contents more. They have been chosen to this end, and we commend them to our members generally.

The Editor's Round Table

(NOTE.—The following are some of the questions that have been asked during the winter at Conventions attended by the General Secretary. As they are of general interest and have an important bearing on our Young People's work, particularly in the Epworth League, they are given here, about as answered at the Convention Round Table.)

What are the principal qualities most desired in an Epworth League President?

Character, Consecration, Business ability, Tact, and Patience.

What are some of the best books on the religious education and training of the young?

A long list might be given; but I esteem Prof. Coe's "Education in Religion and Morals" as the best book of this kind, of which I have any knowledge.

What would you say is the chief business of the Epworth League?

To develop character through intelligent and sustained service in the Kingdom of God, under Methodist auspices and through the machinery of the Methodist Church. Hence, to make young Methodists both good and good for something.

How may the Sunday School and the League help each other?

The Sunday School may help the League by providing it with members to be trained in actual and practical industry in the church; the League may help the Sunday School by providing it with a strong and capable working force to carry on its operations. Neither organization is independent of the other. The League is supplementary to the school. The school has been called the people's religious university. If so, the League is the college of practical science.

What are the main duties of a District League Executive?

To oversee the League work on the district. To do this by stimulating Leagues wherever they exist, to ensure local efficiency, and by organizing new Leagues wherever none are now. Organization, Guidance, Stimulation are three good words to apply here.

What can a Junior League expect of a Pastor?

On the Pastor, by authority and appointment of the Discipline, rests the responsibility for the existence and supervision of a Junior League. It is his business to provide a Junior League or something equivalent, for the spiritual nurture and culture of the girls and boys of his congregation. The Catechumen Class or the Junior League is not optional, but

obligatory, and where neither one exists, the Pastor is neglectful of his plain duties to the children as fully outlined in the Discipline.

How can the League Topics be made most profitable?

By preparing them intelligently, presenting them practically, and utilizing as many persons as possible in dealing with them in the weekly meeting. The plan of treating the topics by departments in order, thus giving each at least one service and subject of study every month, is found very satisfactory in a large majority of our Leagues.

What are the chief duties of the Field Secretaries of the General Board?

To co-operate with the General Secretary in carrying out the Sunday School and Epworth League policy of the General Conference under the guidance and direction of the General Board. An inventory of their duties would be too long to give. Speaking generally, they attend Conventions, hold Institutes, assist in Summer Schools, address local meetings, and seek in every possible way to have the field allotted to them as well organized, equipped, and fruitful as possible. In short, each one aims to cultivate his field or territory for the largest yield of spiritual harvest.

Should the Minister take all the Consecration Services?

No, unless the circumstances seem to make it necessary. Under ordinary conditions, the Minister should take his turn only, and not be expected to conduct every monthly consecration meeting. Unless the more experienced of the League members are given just such responsible work to do, they will be leading the consecration meetings; they will hardly develop the talent of religious leadership, without which the church can never do her best and most effective work for God.

Would you advise a Pastor or League President to push for a Junior League where there is already a good Mission Band?

Yes, if the W. M. Auxiliary would only see that as the greater may contain the less, so a Junior Epworth League may contain a Mission Band. No, if the W. M. Auxiliary were determined to have a separate Band, whether there were a Junior League or not. The Junior League is the only society in the Methodist Church that constitutionally exists for the discharge of the church's full duty to the children. Missionary instruction is a part, but by no means all. To relate the boys and girls to Christ by an intelligent faith in Him, to unite them in the