

Christian Endeavor Dangers.

For the Review.

Unseen dangers lurk in every sea. Full many a gallant vessel, tempest-driven, has struck on some hidden reef and gone down with all on board. When a barque sails on unknown seas; when the sky is murky and the wind is rising, the trusty "look-out" holds an important post. All will bless the keen-eyed seaman who from his lofty height warns of approaching danger and cries out, "Rocks Ahead!" Foolish indeed would that crew be which heeded not the friendly voice warning of rocks or treacherous shoals. It is not probable, however, that many will be seriously alarmed by the cry of "Rocks Ahead!" sounded out in your last issue, and purporting to be from one "On the Look-out" in the rigging of the good ship, "ENDEAVOR." There is a lack of intimate knowledge of the Society's plans and purposes, and of sympathy with its actual work, which will cause every intelligent Endeavorer to suspect that the warning is not from one of the ships' crew at all, but is the distant cry of one who watches the vessels progress from afar.

No true friend of Christian Endeavor will object to friendly criticism. The movement is still young and is in need of much sage advice. It is moreover, eager to profit by "the experience of the wisest men of God," whether they are in harmony with the movement or not. All that it asks is sympathy with the young people who form these societies, justice in giving credit for whatever good has been accomplished, and a disposition to help them to a higher degree of efficiency in Christ's service. It is extremely doubtful if anything can be learned from teachers who, without faith in the pupil or hope for their future, only raised anger signals and never propose a remedy. Is it fair to speak of possible dangers as if they were the actual rocks on which the societies were being shipwrecked? Or if one society has had a mishap in this direction or in that, is it fair to reason from one society to twenty thousand? or to give the experience of one pastor as that of "the best and wisest men in all the churches?"

When "On the Look-out" speaks of "a danger that seems (?) to lurk in the social element" of the C.E. societies, one is reminded of the disturbing statements of modern bacteriologists, that disease germs may possibly lurk in bank-bills, school-books, communion cups, fruits, foods, and in fact, almost any conceivable thing. There is danger. But it is better to take ordinary precaution and run the risk of possible danger than to starve or give up the activities of life. An Endeavor Society here and there may make the mistake of placing too much stress upon the social features of the movement; but is the social element to be abolished from every society on this account? Would it not be better for some "wise man of God" to come to the rescue of such societies, and keep before them the supreme end of Christian Endeavor, rather than that the social side should be lost sight of completely and these societies become cold, and formal, and languishing?

The charge that the movement is in danger of becoming mercenary, would be serious if it were not so plainly unfair. Conventions are held, because "there is money in it." Railroads, publishers, officers push this movement, because "there is money in it." Conventions may or may not yield returns commensurate with the expense, but why single out the C.E. conventions? While "the wisest and best men" acknowledge the value of such conventions as the Sabbath school, Y.M.C.A., W.F.M.S., no argument can fairly be raised against those of Christian Endeavor. It is difficult to see how any Christian can reasonably object to "the sale of newspapers containing the accounts of the meetings." When the daily press of the great cities are filled with accounts of the proceedings of police courts, scandals in high life, divorce suits, prize fights, horse races, etc., it would seem to most people a blessing to have circulated in tens of thousands of homes accounts of the Lord's work at home and abroad by experienced and trusted workers; to bring before a

multitude who are unreached by the churches inspiring addresses by such men as D. L. Moody, Wilbur Chapman, John G. Wooley, Dr. Talmage, Dr. Wayland Hoyt, Dr. Barrows, Dr. Potts. Most people would not be adverse to the expenditure of a little money for such a purpose; but opinions differ! The publishers of the *Golden Rule* and *The Endeavor Herald* also come in for their share of the charge of being mercenary. The writer of the sweeping article has perhaps a personal acquaintance with the publishers of these papers. But if they have any desire to promote the cause of Christ, or have any zeal for the glory of God, they receive no credit for it. It satisfies "On the Look-out" to say, their work is done because "there is money in it." The same charge could be made with as much reason against the publishers of almost every religious paper and every religious book in Christendom.

The third danger specified is "the self-sufficient, intermeddling spirit which too often attends the operations" of the Christian Endeavor Society. The evidence of this is found in a desire to control Sabbath schools and mission work, and in its efforts for social reform. It is not easy to see how anything in the nature of this movement should necessarily generate the spirit of interference with the church's work. The society is part of the local church, and under the complete control of the session. It owes its allegiance to no other organization. Its members are pledged to loyalty and support of the church. It is quite possible to conceive that a society, under exceptional circumstances, and composed of exceptional members, might prove refractory, but that is a very different thing from saying that there is a tendency in the very nature of the society, to produce a "self-sufficient and intermeddling spirit." The whole history of the movement, and the testimony of thousands of ministers disproves the existence of any such tendency. Among the loyalest and most faithful sons and daughters of the Presbyterian Church will be found the members of the Christian Endeavor Society. They teach in the Sabbath schools, work in missions, Bands of Hope, Mission Bands, hold positions of trust in Sessions and Boards of Management; contribute of their means to the schemes of the Church; and are found, by hundreds of ministers to be always ready to engage in any work in which they may ask their co-operation. It may be true that Christian Endeavor is at tempting too much when it faces with fresh enthusiasm the obstacles that "godly men have mourned over and struggled with for centuries." But if so, its ardor will be sufficiently tried by conflict with the foe without any application of cold water from its professed friends. It finds itself in its efforts "for Christ and the Church" face to face with hoary iniquities which stand in the way of the cause of Christ. Yet "On the Look out" would have Endeavorers fold their hands in the presence of these flagrant evils and "confine themselves to the humble work of Christian benevolence!" He would have young people, for instance, care for the drunkard and the drunkard's wife and children, but not interfere with the liquor curse which produces all their woe. And why? Because godly men in their young days have struggled with these evils and have grown weary of the warfare. There is surely something inspiring in the ardor with which young souls take up the struggle for the triumphs of righteousness. The daughters prophecy and the young men see visions of a brighter and better day, and go forward in the name of Christ to do what they can to make their dreams come true in home, and church, and country. These young people are in earnest, they need to be wisely directed. Is not this a time for "the best and wisest men" of the Church to come forward with their experience and calm judgment to guide this movement so that it shall "develop into an institution fraught with blessing?"

Christian Endeavor does not claim to be perfect, but it does claim an unprecedented measure of success in bringing young people into close connection with the life and work of the church. This is now beyond a peradventure. Many a church in which the position of the young people was one of religious inertia, has through this society been enabled to train them for a life of Christian usefulness, and is now receiving from them valuable service. It has bound the young people to the church in conserving their highest spiritual welfare, and is educating them to become its future supporters and workers. There is one danger which faces us the danger of allowing this providential young people's movement to lie unused. It goes without saying that the church which to-day best succeeds in reaching its young people, and in training them for active Christian service, will be the influential church to-morrow. No church can for long maintain its efficiency which fails to enlist the sympathy and consecrated energy of the young. It is just here that Christian Endeavor comes forward and offers itself as the handmaid of the church. The danger now is that through lack of appreciation or of sympathy, or of kindly direction and oversight this mighty force of consecrated youthful piety and energy will not be utilized as it should for the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom. — A CHRISTIAN ENDEAVORER.