

The Canadian . . .

## Epworth Era

ORGAN OF THE EPWORTH LEAGUES AND  
OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES  
IN THE METHODIST CHURCH.

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### Editorial.

#### Renew the Invitation.

This paper is conducted strictly on the "invitation system." It does not go regularly to any one, except an invitation has been extended, and this must be renewed each year, as our business is conducted on the cash in advance principle.

Last year some of our subscribers were quite surprised to find that their paper was stopped, and some of them wrote to the office to know the reason. The simple explanation was that their subscriptions had not been renewed, and the names had been removed from the mailing list.

We are very desirous of retaining all our present readers and carrying them over into the new year. The paper will be better value than ever before, and during the next six months will contain features of special value. Hand your half dollar to the corresponding secretary of the League, or to the pastor, and you will receive the ERA regularly.

Renew! Renew! RENEW!

#### The Modern Theatre.

Not long ago we had a somewhat suggestive conversation, on the train, with a gentleman who, of his own accord opened up the question of the modern theatre. It was his opinion that the stage was degenerating every year. He said that he was connected with the Church of England, and felt under no restraint in regard to attending theatrical entertainments, but every time he went lessened his respect for those who thus catered to the public.

A few weeks since he met a couple of young ladies from the country, in Toronto, and desiring to make their stay in the city a pleasant one, proposed that a visit be made to the theatre. As he was aware that one of the girls was a Methodist, he was not at all urgent about the matter.

Knowing the rules of our church in regard to theatre going he felt that he was scarcely doing the right thing in taking this young Methodist upon forbidden ground. She assured him, however, that she was old enough to decide for herself, and really wished to go.

The play was an exciting one, dealing with love and passion. Some of the actors were quite immodestly dressed, and the dialogue abounded in expressions that were suggestive of evil. Altogether the evening's entertainment left an exceedingly bad taste in the mouth. Thinking that this play might be an exception, they went to another theatre on the next evening and witnessed one of the popular dramas, which was drawing crowds. It was even worse than that of the previous night, and before the curtain was rung down the gentleman felt ashamed that he had brought the young ladies to the place.

The play was of such a character that it could not very well be discussed, so he simply turned to the young Methodist, after their return home, and said: "Don't you think, Miss B——, that the men who framed the Methodist rules knew what they were doing when they put theatre-going under the ban?"

"Yes," she replied, "I think they did."

#### The Elections.

As far as religious work is concerned, it is a blessing that the elections are over. The attention of the people has been more or less turned away from the evangelistic efforts which ought to be made at this time of the year, and, unfortunately, in some places the bitterness of party strife has turned neighbor against neighbor, and transformed friends into enemies.

The moral effect of the campaign, too, has not been healthy in its influence upon young people. There was considerable falsehood and much deliberate misrepresentation upon both sides. One paper has declared that a certain public man is scarcely less than an angel, while the journal of the other party has not hesitated to portray him as but little better than a devil. A certain class of politicians has been described as "honest and capable administrators," "men who deserve the confidence and support of the public," "broad-minded and clear-headed statesmen"; but the other political party has characterized these same men as "corrupt and unreliable," "scoundrels," "insatiable horde of political adventurers." A stranger from another country would find it a difficult thing to form an opinion of the character of our public men by reading party newspapers. It seems as if, where politics are concerned, every man looks through the spectacles of his party prejudices, and is unable to behold anything but what is bad in his opponents.

It has been astonishing to see with what coolness and ease the newspapers have lied about each other, and about the doings of the party during the campaign. One paper stated that in one of our cities a public meeting was held which was attended by such a large and enthusiastic crowd that "late comers found it absolutely impossible to gain admission to the building." As a matter of fact, the building was scarcely more than half full.

It would almost seem as if during a political campaign the newspapers entered into a mutual arrangement to indulge in a regular carnival of lying.

It may be necessary to have parties in the conduct of the government, but partisanship is always objectionable. We ought to hold ourselves ready to recognize the good things in the platform of our opponent, and to give him credit for honesty of purpose so far as the facts will warrant it, when viewed with an unprejudiced eye. No man should be so wedded to his party as to make him blind to its faults. He should rather cultivate independence of thought and action, and be prepared to condemn even his own side when he believes that it has done wrong.

The recent elections have demonstrated that there are many things which need attention from the high-minded and conscientious citizen who desires to see his country prosper.

#### "I Am Glad You Asked Me."

A pastor related the following incident at a convention the other day. Desiring a young lady to prepare a paper for the convention programme, he had asked her, rather expecting the usual excuses and refusals which he had heard so many times from others. Judge of his astonishment when the lady at once complied with the request, adding, "I am glad that you asked me." She went on to explain that she had been giving some attention to the subject, and would esteem it a privilege to still further look into it in preparing a paper.

What a joy it would be to pastors and League presidents if all our members would exhibit more of this spirit!

#### The Elder Brother.

It is somewhat peculiar that in nearly all the expositions and sermons on the Prodigal Son, the principal lesson of the parable is entirely overlooked. It is generally expounded as if the purpose of the Saviour was to show the folly of dissipation and sin, and the great love of God in welcoming the returning wanderer. These are indeed very beautifully illustrated, but only incidentally. We must look elsewhere for the real point of emphasis.

In interpreting this parable, we should remember that Jesus told it for the express purpose of answering the reproach of those who blamed him for mixing with publicans and sinners, and the actual lesson he desired to impress was that there is more hope for the openly vicious man than for the hypocritical. It is rather strange that the International Sunday-school Lesson Committee should have omitted all reference to the Elder Brother, for he was the man that Christ mainly had in view when he related the story. It is scarcely likely that He would have told it for the sake of that portion which our Sunday-schools have recently been studying, beautiful as it is. The self-righteousness and selfishness of the Elder Brother constitute the main point of the parable.