

How to Secure and Retain Young Men for the League

BY MR. S. BAKER.

MUCH may be said on this subject, but the fundamental conditions may be very briefly stated. Three of these I believe to be:

1. Young men whose souls have been stirred by the Holy Spirit.

2. Church Boards anxiously looking out for opportunities to use young men.

3. A man of middle age, deeply interested in young men. Some of these are sometimes forgotten or treated as of only secondary importance, because the real purpose of the Epworth League is not realized.

I am convinced that wherever you have a couple of young men, truly converted, you have the first essential. I do not believe young women can take their place; neither do I believe that older men can. There must be some manly spirit leading or young men will not follow, because they need rational and enthusiastic meetings. The only leagues or societies that I have known to be marked by their presence and influence of young men, have had the leadership of a couple of Christian young men workers who were filled with the Holy Spirit. A League without a distinctly marked Christian spirit will do much harm to the church life of its members. Social, educational and amusement inducements must never be permitted to challenge the supremacy of the spiritual, for membership secured in this way is only transitory. The call of young men to young men never falls on deaf ears.

Church boards should always be anxiously looking out for opportunities to use young men. Too often I have found that boards for various forms of church work have been composed exclusively of old or middle-aged men. Young men are shut out of church work at the very period of their life when nature supplies the instinctive craving for friendship, leadership and occupation. When the great crisis in their life comes the tendrils of church work should be so entwined about them that they cannot break away. Why should they not be among the ushers of the church, officers in the Sunday School, or members of some of the church boards? My experience has been that they have had nothing to do except come to Sunday School. Church boards must improve the means of employment for young men. They must find out where the young men are, and go out to compel them to come in. At the Congregational Church in Westminster, old London, very large numbers of young men attend League meetings. Every night in the week men attend the church for lessons on "Trades," or in "Political Economy," or in some educational subject, or for help in the necessary search for work, or to take part in some spiritual exercise. I merely mention this to show that where young men's wants are met there they will congregate. Not every church can appoint a lay superintendent to devote his whole time to his work. In cities like this I believe, however, that such appointments are equally as necessary as the pastor. The place for the Y. M. C. A. is in the church. I believe it high time for the churches to awake to the fact that young people are demanding that the church be more than an auditorium for sermons to tickle the ears of men and women who are content to sit down and listen.

Almost as important as the young men is the middle aged. This is a role I have tried to fill myself. My wife says, and she ought to know, that I never do anything I can get anybody else to do. My young men believe that I would not ask them to do anything they could not or ought not to do, and scarcely ever refuse to take the part I wish.

Not possessing their strength, their animal spirit, their grand ambitions, but having a profound belief and admiration for their capabilities, I have permitted myself to be carried away by their vitality and hopes, and contented myself with endeavoring to restrain their exuberance within the limits of common sense. But rarely should a woman be president, and never anyone who will not give the time to the duties of the office. A few older persons who are deeply interested in this work, willing to view kindly the imperfections of youth, may really assist by their attendance, but they should never dominate the society. My power to be interested in all

young men and to lead was too limited to get the results one would wish. But a leader of men backed by a couple of young men guided by deep love for young people will secure young men at the League meetings if they really desire to have them.

Wherever these three conditions are met you will find young men. Where young men are not in attendance the best thing to do is to seek the cause along these lines.

As supplementary means of arousing interest, and to keep the work going, I have found the following plans to work well at times:

1. A special committee to bring young men to the meetings. A young man from Wingham came to reside here. His employer told the pastor of the church. That afternoon two young men called, took him out to see the city, took him later to Sunday School and Epworth League. That is the way they do at Dundas Street Centre Church. This concrete example speaks plainly.

2. Let the meetings be properly conducted and virile work taken up. Nothing can be more disappointing than silly giggling and trashy papers read by people either too ignorant or too lazy to study the subject.

3. The President or some two or three members of the Executive should be interested in the employment of the young men. No young man I ever had in my League went down in his profession or calling. I made it my business to see that he did not.

4. The Athletic Club should be subject to the Executive of the League. I am not a sport, and do not play baseball, but I have always attended the matches of my young men and have always permitted myself to be enthused. I do not think, however, that the League meetings are the proper times to deal with these matters. The best young man I have secured was through his games. Good fishermen try different baits.

5. I have used study clubs also to get the young men interested. Courses of study in electricity, history and literature have been taken up and examinations set upon these courses. Conscientious study was demanded, and my young men fully repaid my time and labor by doing actual study. These lectures were always on separate nights, as I do not feel that sacred things should be handmaids to secular.

6. Lacking the power to enthuse crowds I have always depended upon individual talks. That has been my failure. Larger men with more time could interest larger crowds. Nevertheless personal contact is a great help to unlock young men's hearts.

London, Ont.

Alcohol and Inspiration

NOT long ago an effort was made by the Students' Total Abstinence Union in Sweden to find out, from well-known artists and literary men, what their views were as to the influence of alcohol on the inspiration of ideas. The question put to them was: "Is alcohol in your opinion adapted to assist or to hinder an artistic or literary worker?" The answers almost without exception were that its use hindered rather than helped them.

Among those whose opinions were asked we find Auguste Rodin, the great sculptor, his answer was short and to the point. "Those who depend on the use of alcohol to give them inspirations or suggestions are doomed to see themselves and their work soon forgotten." Very interesting is Bjoernjerne Bjornson's reply: "When I am engaged in literary work I never use alcoholic liquors, they would only hinder me. The ideas or fancies produced by alcoholic inspiration are not healthy nor probable, and are useless for my works." Gustav Trensen says: "Even a thimbleful of spirits weakens all my best faculties." The Swedish painter, Georg Von Rosen, finishes his remarks as follows: "Very far from believing that the use of alcohol helps to produce artistic ideas or conceptions, I am of the contrary opinion, and believe they will only be hysterical and monstrous, and in most cases they will lead to a weakening and finally to a break-up of all inspiring effort."