

the work among the young people of the District. On several fields Bible Study classes, literary classes, boys' clubs, girls' societies, report having made progress that was highly gratifying in spite of the strong counter attractions. On two or three of the circuits, especially in the larger towns, the report of loss through moving picture shows caused deep concern. The chief opposition that has to be faced in the smaller towns and villages is the dance hall.

Two thoughts were suggested on reading the above: 1, the manifest tendency to substitute some other form of Young People's Society for the Epworth League; and 2, the need of the Church becoming more and more the centre of the social life of the young people in the community. Here is an extract from a letter received recently from one of the best known of our eastern ministers. It states the case clearly regarding our first thought:

*Other organizations that are a sort of modification of the Epworth League are being introduced, and seem short-lived. I am convinced that the Epworth League, in the completeness of its organization and in its adaptability to all conditions, has not been equalled and cannot easily be surpassed.*

That conviction is worth thinking over, and we believe the judgment leading up to it is sound. As to the Epworth League's place in the social life of the community, we think that a careful perusal of Mr. Bishop's article further on in this issue will prove most suggestive. Our sympathy is with young people who like pictures. They should have them, but the Church should insist that the pictures that attract are morally wholesome and artistically beautiful. No unclean thing, whether for eye or ear, should be tolerated, and a high moral sense and an acute moral conscience should so exist in every community. The Epworth League Church that our streets and all they contain shall be safe places for our boys and girls in every way. God pity the young folk who are under the spell of the dance hall. And while you pity them, too, do not blame them severely for forming dance hall tastes and companionships if your church offers them nothing to minister to their social natures or affords them wholesome recreation and healthful pleasures.

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*"We urge our ministers, Epworth League Presidents and League workers in general, to do all in their power to develop the prayer spirit of the Epworth League meetings, even though it may mean less top reading, and that a copy of this resolution be sent each minister and Epworth League President."*

This is part of a minute of proceedings at one of our central District Meetings, and touches a vital matter. We have pleasure in passing on the recommendation it contains to all our Leagues. Literary Circles are good, Social Clubs are congenial. Missionary Societies are valuable; but an Epworth League is more than any of these, more indeed than all put together. It is essentially a Holy Club, as truly as was that at Oxford when Wesley started his glorious campaign for inward spiritual life and growth. The Epworth League includes the study of literary topics, it exercises a wholesome social influence, it raises missionary money; but it cannot fulfil its office and ministry by these alone. It must breathe the vital atmosphere of prayer, all its meetings must be permeated by the spirit of prayer, all its activities must be prompted by the motive which prayer engenders, and unless its members learn how to pray and live out the prayer life, it is a failure as an Epworth League.

## A Plain Talk Between Ourselves Concerning This Paper

### PAST! PRESENT! FUTURE?

### It Has Had a Past! It Has a Present! Shall It Have a Future?

#### THE ANSWER RESTS WITH ITS PATRONS AND FRIENDS

If you care about it, read this article. You may find it illuminating. If you do not, pass along. You may find something to interest you further on.

THE following "Plain Talk" was written originally for the Editor of these pages. On consultation with the Manager of the Periodical Department of the Book Room, and on his advice it was not printed in the paper, but was issued in leaflet form and a copy was sent to all our ministers and Young People's Societies' presidents. That was in June, 1910. A second issue was similarly circulated in January, 1912. The thought of the Manager of the Periodical Department of the Book Room was that it might be unwise to expose our weaknesses, and that our readers should not be lectured on the matter of circulation, for not only, but the non-subscribers, were to blame for the comparative fewness of our patrons. But it is time to speak out, and, whether wise or unwise, the Editor deems this an opportune issue in which to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" concerning this paper.

First, to get our viewpoint in June, 1910, read the circular to which reference has been made above. Here it is:

#### A PLAIN TALK BETWEEN OURSELVES.

June, 1910.

In the last number OF THE CANADIAN EPWORTH ERA which he prepared (December, 1908), Dr. Crews, who was then its editor, made this important statement regarding it: "If the subscription list falls off to any appreciable extent, the result will be that the Era will go out of existence altogether, a consummation devoutly to be regretted. Let it be understood that the only way for the Epworth League to have a paper of its own is for its members to rally to its support in a loyal and enthusiastic way."

Immediately following the appearance of this editorial paragraph unexpected changes, consequent on the death of Dr. Withrow, took place. Dr. Crews became editor of the Sunday School publications, and to the writer, as part of his duties as Secretary of the General Board of Sunday Schools and Young People's Societies, was given editorial charge of the Era.

Though our subscribers have not decreased in number, we have not very materially increased, and we regret to say that our Leagues have not generally responded to the former editor's last call to "rally to its support in a loyal and enthusiastic way." Just why this has been the case the present editor has been making it his concern, as far as possible, to find out. While he is not responsible for the publication of the Era, he is naturally intensely interested in the business success of the paper, and wants to see it where it never has been, on a self-supporting and paying basis.

Here are a few facts that an examination of our records and mailing sheets has shown:

There are a number of Leagues and other Young People's Societies where not even one Era is taken. What kind of progress can they ever expect to make? What kind of a society can they ever hope to be?

There are fully 500 post offices where only a single copy of the paper is on the mailing sheet.

There are many places, we are told, where the Era is passed around among the appointed leaders of the weekly meetings, and then simply for assistance in the preparation of the topics. This is unwise and unfair, and looks like indifference or penuriousness, or both.

There are many hundreds of League officers who are not subscribers. How any person holding any official relation to the young people's work, or occupying any office in any League or Young People's Society can do intelligent or progressive work or keep in touch with the growth of the Church's activities among the young people without the Era, we cannot understand. If only all our officers took the paper, our subscription list would greatly and immediately grow.

Now note that every League has been asked by personal request from the General Secretary and Editor to appoint an Agent for the Era, and thus provide both the Book Steward and the Editor with one in every society with whom to correspond in the interest of the paper.

The Editor has personally addressed those who are the only subscribers at their post offices, asking for their co-operation in securing new names.

He has written all the officers whose names and addresses he has who are not subscribers, soliciting their subscriptions.

He has sent out many sample copies to pastors, presidents, secretaries and others, that they may at least have some slight acquaintance with the paper.

If, after thirteen full years of trial, the Epworth Leagues, other Young People's Societies and Sunday Schools of Canadian Methodism do not appreciate the Era enough to give it their support and make it self-sustaining, the Editor is of the opinion that the Book Committee might well question its responsibility or obligation for the continued publication of it month after month at loss.

Young people, do you not feel that the Editor somewhat ashamed and humiliated that, with an aggregate membership of 80,000, we are not maintaining our paper on a paying business basis?

Of course the paper does not please everybody. What paper ever did or ever will? But while some have criticized it, the great majority of those who have either written or spoken of it have done so in words of kindly appreciation.

Your General Secretary has many other duties to perform besides editing the Era, but though various calls on his time and strength are made, he will continue to do his best to give to the Church a practical and helpful paper dealing with organized Sunday School and young people's work, but he reminds the whole body of Methodist youth of what Dr. Crews wrote in his last editorial, and which is quoted in italics above.

These are some facts that ought to be widely known and for which the Editor has no apology. They are plainly stated and honestly expressed. The issue remains with you.

Let us all work together, and so make