

Messenger and Visitor

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The B. Y. P. U. Organization.

We devoted a little space last week to a consideration of the B. Y. P. U. organization, with an intimation that we might return to the subject. It was shown that while the aims of the organization are unquestionably good, there is nevertheless a growing conviction that in its practical results it is not an unmixed benefit, and that so far at least as our people in these Maritime Provinces are concerned, the interest in the movement, so strongly manifested a few years ago, has very perceptibly declined. In view of these facts it seems to us worth while to give attention to some things which militate against the permanency of the young people's societies as at present organized, and to consider whether there are not possible means of preserving whatever is good in the aims and work of the young people's movement without perpetuating its objectionable features.

There are to our mind serious objections to the B. Y. P. U. organization, some of which have respect to its principle and some to its methods. The former are of course the more important. It is, as we regard it, an objectionable feature of the organization that it involves the formation of societies within the churches, with an external association which does not embrace the churches as such but only something which is a part or a feature of the church's life. In such a plan of organization there must be always a danger that the society will consider itself something apart from the church, and that the affiliation and interest of its members will be with the society rather than with the church, with the result that their sense of unity with the church will be proportionately weakened. And certainly it cannot be regarded as a trifling matter to impair the strength of church fellowship. Nor will it do to say that this is merely a theoretical objection which finds no support in facts. So far indeed as our churches in these Provinces are concerned, little reason for apprehension in this particular may have become apparent, but if we are not much mistaken, that can by no means be said respecting the working of the B. Y. P. U. and the C. E. societies in the United States, where there are sufficient indications that the factional tendency of these organizations has become in many instances quite manifest. During recent years the fashion of creating organizations within the church has obtained to such a degree that in many cases the church has become so overgrown with societies as seriously to obscure its visibility. From this fad of modern ecclesiasticism we believe that we shall shortly see a strong revulsion, and the emphasis will be laid again—where it properly belongs—on the church as the one organization of divine authority. It will be recognized that the life forces of the tree are best expended in building up the tree itself, rather than in nourishing shoots, however luxuriant, which may grow up about the parent stem. In Baptist churches organized upon the congregational plan, in which ecclesiastical life and authority centre in the local organization, it is all the more important that the church should be a church and not a congeries of societies.

Another point in which we are unable to regard the principle of the young people's movement as wholesome, is its separation between the younger and the older elements in the church. Such a separation is unnatural. It is not the law of the family, nor is it the law of the normally constituted church. The young need the old, and the old need the young. That is true of the family, it is true of society generally, and it is no less true of the church. To create or recognize any age line in the matter of worship is unnatural and injurious, it interferes

with the development and expression of that brotherly sympathy which should exist throughout the entire membership of the church, it deprives the young Christians of very valuable help that should come to them through the advanced experience and knowledge of older Christians; and it deprives the older people of that cheer and inspiration which in many ways the presence of young Christians affords. Certainly it is not intended to intimate that it is by any means the purpose of the B. Y. P. U. or the Christian Endeavor organizations to separate the young people in sympathy and worship from the older, but that such a tendency is involved in the principle of organization and more or less manifest in practice is we think unquestionable. It may be said that the young people's organizations realize their most valuable function in the education of their members in Biblical knowledge and Christian culture. But, as was pointed out last week, our unions appear to be dropping to a great extent the educational work, and besides this it may well be questioned whether the work of education in our churches, a work which we are disposed to regard as highly important, is one in respect to which an arbitrary age limit should be drawn.

So far however as the educational work is concerned, it would appear that the difficulties may have reference more to the method than to the principle of the organization. The courses of study offered to our unions are prepared and published at a distant centre, in another country; and although some of these courses have been of much interest and value, others have not been of such a character as to commend them to the judgment of our pastors and other leaders in our B. Y. P. U. work as being well adapted for use among our people here. Then there has been always the additional difficulty that the notes necessary to an intelligent study of these courses are obtainable only in the newspaper published by the Union, the subscription to which involves a considerable and otherwise unnecessary expense. How to make satisfactory arrangements for this work has been from the beginning of it a point of great difficulty, leading to prolonged and vexatious discussions at the annual meetings, and many futile attempts to deal with the situation. If nothing more can be done for the unions in this connection than has been done in the past—and there appears to be nothing in prospect—the interest of our people in the educational work of the Union is likely to continue to be an ebbing tide.

It will perhaps be said that the editorial contribution to this discussion is assuming largely the character of destructive criticism. But whatever may be said of the present article, we wish to assure our readers that it was not our intention merely to point out defects and dangerous tendencies, and if they will bear with us we will endeavor in another article to indicate lines along which, as it seems to us, that which is valuable in the B. Y. P. U. work can be conserved on a permanent basis and with large advantage to the denomination.

Editorial Notes.

—We learn from the Watchman that Mrs. Isabella Bird Bishop, the great traveller and author, has offered herself to the Bishop of Calcutta for mission work in India. When she began her extensive travels Mrs. Bishop was a decided opponent of missions, but has been completely converted by her visits to mission lands, until she now proposes to become a missionary herself. She has visited more mission stations in many lands and of all religious bodies than any other person. It is supposed that she will be self-sustaining in her mission work.

—Somebody who has been at the trouble of computing the expense of the three great young people's Conventions held last month in the United States, puts that of the Epworth League which met in San Francisco at \$1,500,000; The Christian Endeavor Convention in Cincinnati at \$350,000 and the B. Y. P. U. Union in Chicago at \$250,000, a total of \$2,100,000. This seems to be a good deal of money to spend on Conventions, but it should be considered that a good deal of the money would have been spent anyway in going on excursions, and perhaps not altogether needlessly, if it had not been spent in attending Conventions.

—The New York Tribune tells us of a woman living in New Britain, Conn., who is a Christian Scientist and maintains that mosquitoes have brains and reasoning powers, that it is outrageous to kill "the little harmless insects" and that all that is necessary is to reason with them. She says: "If a mosquito is troubling you just

speak to him kindly and say, 'Look here, my friend, you leave me alone and I'll leave you alone.' Then believe that he won't bite you! Even if he does his sting won't hurt. I have done this for years and now enjoy having the pretty little things around and listening to their musical buzz." What an angel of mercy this dear Connecticut woman might be, if only she would go down into the meadows or the marshes at the times when the mosquito hosts set the battle in array against the hay-makers, argue these reasonable insects into good behaviour and calm the apprehensions of the men who are silly enough to regard this intellectual and highly cultured insect as a blood-thirsty little monster! And how intense would be her own enjoyment in having such countless numbers of the pretty little things around and listening to "their musical buzz."

—The Casket says:

Our Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist friends in this Province are very indignant that they are not to be represented at the reception to be given to the Duke of Cornwall when he arrives at Halifax. They are perfectly right. We have no State religion in this country, and if the Archbishop of Halifax and the Bishop of Nova Scotia are to be present on this occasion in their official capacity the other denominations should be invited to send representatives also. Although we do not receive equal rights ourselves when they can safely be kept from us, we are always in favor of equal rights for others.

We have not heard any expression of indignation on the part of Baptists in connection with this matter, although certainly Baptists have quite as much right to recognition on such an occasion as the religious bodies represented by mitred heads. For our part, however, we cannot understand why, in this country where there is no State religion, anybody or any body should demand or should obtain recognition on ecclesiastical grounds on such an occasion as that of the Duke's reception. Why should we wish at such a time to parade our religious differences and ecclesiastical distinctions or intrude upon the notice of royalty in any other character than as Canadian citizens and loyal subjects of the King? But some of our friends are nothing if not ecclesiastical.

—In an address on the history of the church delivered at the Baptist Anniversaries in Springfield, President Faunce of Brown University, speaking of early American Baptists said: "The founders of our churches in America were men of might, chosen for a special purpose and equipped with a dauntless courage. They were not always gracious and urbane. They that live delicately are in king's houses. But those who prepare the way of the Lord in the desert are clothed in camel's hair and a leathern girdle. Carlyle says of Dante that he was hardly the man that one would care to invite to dinner. Roger Williams was sure to distrust an assembly of complacent and well-fed saints. The 14 weeks in the forest 'not knowing what bed or board did mean' had put an edge on his speech for which we need not apologise. He was a good fighter and makes a good ancestor. Obediah Holmes had some convictions not to be whipped out of him in a single hour. And not only in New England but in the West and South the pioneers of our work were men who, in power of sacrifice, willingness to face obstacles, to endure scorn and rebuff, were of heroic mould and proved their apostolic succession by their apostolic success. Let their early history be studied more, and more closely taught to all who would shape our future."

—The writer of the New York Examiner's report of the B. Y. P. U. Convention lately held in Chicago, recalls the fact that this year the Union returned to the city of its nativity, having been founded there at the Second Baptist church on July 7, 1891. In this connection the Examiner correspondent says: "The Union may be said to have been lunched with a boom. Its growth, however, has been slow, and both its friends and its opponents have been disappointed in their prophecies concerning it. The movement has never been contagious like that of the Christian Endeavor Society. The seed, scattered broadcast over the land, has only fructified in patches. The East has never been in entire sympathy with its purposes, but the West and a part of the South have accepted it with a considerable degree of unanimity. One of the noticeable things about this meeting has been the absence of Eastern faces, and the monopolization of the programme almost entirely by Western men. This is due, of course, in a large measure to the fact that the Convention was held in the West, but the fact is none the less noteworthy." The writer quoted believes, however, that the movement possesses a vitality which challenges more than mere tolerance on the part of its opponents. He thinks it is not likely to die, and this eleventh Convention may result in starting it on the road to larger growth and usefulness. "At least," he says, "that seemed to be the thought and the hope expressed in the Convention addresses and in private conversation."

—One would think, from the anxiety of certain St. John and Halifax papers for the removal of all legal upon restrictions the selling of soda water on Sundays, that soda water was the natural and indispensable beverage of the people of this country and that unless every man, woman and child can have free access to the ever-vigilant fluid seven days out of the week, there must re-

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