



The Literary Department

Learning for Life



Province of the Literary Department

BY NORA E. WEISER.

The work of this department is vastly different from that of any other organization of the church. It has a work peculiarly its own, and with earnest, enthusiastic, consecrated workers it can make itself an important factor in the life of the church. With it rests much of the training for active work in the devotional services of the League, in the Sunday School, and in other church organizations. In short, it can be made a training school for the young people. They need to be trained to think and to express their thoughts in a clear, concise manner.

This being the case, we need to interest as many of the young members of the Church and congregation in our literary work as possible. At this point let me say every member of the League ought to take some part in these meetings. Too often we have members who think they can do nothing. Every one ought to feel that he has something to do, and take upon himself his share of success or failure. If you can lead him to see that he must share the praise for success or bear his part of the blame for failure, I believe our work will show better results. As I said before, every one should have some work to do. I do not wish to be misunderstood here. We may have members who will not work in the literary meetings, but work well in other meetings. However, observation does not bear it out.

Our new members need to be given work to do. If they are put to work, they feel that they have a place with us. I don't mean that you should be overzealous in giving work, but that a prudent leader will eventually find something for them to do.

The Third Vice-President should find the gift of every Leaguer. To do this, it is necessary to be acquainted with each one. Watch your opportunity, and you can generally find in what direction the talent lies.

As before stated, we meet with those who think they cannot do anything. They don't know what they can do until they try. Their chief plea is that there are those who can do better than they. As for that matter, we are all very much alike on this point. I am reminded of one incident I read the other day. A small boy went to an entertainment with an older brother. They arrived late and the hall was well filled. The little fellow complained that all the good places were taken. The older replied as follows: "Course they are! You didn't suppose everybody else was going to wait till you got here, did you? Get in where you can, and watch your chance to edge along." The young Leaguer should not be discouraged because he cannot do as well as others. If he will only get in the working ranks, he will eventually "edge along."

Getting our young people to work is by no means all of the work of the Literary Department. Giving them something to do is quite another matter. In the first place, we need H. C. interesting programmes. There ought to be something said or done at every meeting that will make not only the members of the League but the visitors anxious to come again. Let the programmes be instructive.

There is so much that can be put before the League that I shall not attempt to outline any plans.

I believe the one book to be kept before our young people is the greatest of all text-books—the Bible. This can be done at literary meetings by a Scripture-reading. We will leave the study of it to the Devotional Department and Sunday School.

Too many know little or nothing about the history of Methodism or our Church literature. Where is there a better place to instill in the hearts and minds of our people a love for these than in our Literary Department? Then, too, we have the whole range of the best literature of the present day and of the past from which to select. Let us choose that which is best and put it before our Leaguers. In this way the best writings are brought to their notice and a desire is created for better things. Does some one say they will not read the books that are discussed? I have known students in a large school to buy a book simply because the president gave them selected readings from it at morning exercises. I have known a large audience to be so stirred that they wanted to read a book mentioned in the course of a lecture.

There is still another important work for the Literary Department. In every community—yes, and often living in our side—are people who have no Church in their hearts, consequently no desire for the literature of the Church. Every one of us knows how rapidly Church papers accumulate and how few of us make much use of them after reading. The literary committee could collect these and see that they were distributed where they might do some good. More than this, we may have some in our own society who do not even take a Church paper. Tact must often be used in sending these to some people that no offense may be given. This thing with a beautiful poem or article which is especially good marked. This will place the paper in their hands, and the chances are they will read more than the marked article.

There is so much to be done in this department that when we have done our best we feel as if we were far from the goal toward which we started. Again I say, make your meetings instructive. My experience with young people is that they care more for the instructive parts of the work than for that which is meant merely to entertain. Our meetings should be open to all and all given a cordial welcome.

I believe, too, in using the talents in our League before we go outside. Our Leaguers are for the most part able to carry the work themselves. However, an occasional talk from some one outside results in much good.

Let us be doers and not dreamers. It is well to plan great things, but thoughts without actions are of no value. Milton W. Mable says of doers: "We all need to come into closer contact with our work. It is not enough to brood over it in thought, penetrating it with ideas and giving it the order of a newer and fresher method; we must press it to our hearts and make it a part of ourselves and others we would transform what might be its drudgery into discipline that makes for character and transmutates its hard materialism into something open and satisfactory."—*Epworth Era*.

Principles and Methods of Bible Study

BY REV. F. G. LEITZ, PEMBROKE, ONT.

More is being said and written about the Bible in these days, in the Christian world than ever before. Never did it occasion such activity. Bible Societies are carrying copies of it by the millions into all corners of the earth. Teachers and preachers are travelling everywhere, expounding and explaining it with a zeal that indicates conviction of its importance to mankind. A home is not a home without a copy or two. Schools are organized where people gather habitually to help each other in the understanding of it. Epworth League and Christian Endeavor Societies are organized to train people in the practice of its teachings, that they may be worked out into the daily life. Scholarly investigations are carried on by men who give up their whole lives to inquiries concerning it. Languages of no practical use but for that purpose, are mastered; explorations are made; ancient monuments are dug up and deciphered; old civilizations are unearthed and their bearing on the Bible closely scrutinized. So it is in the Christian world.

The non-Christian people are asking about it. India, China, Japan and Turkey are making earnest enquiries, and Missionary Societies on big scales, are moving to answer them.

The person who ignores the Bible or is indifferent towards it, is not alive in any real sense. He cannot be a Christian. Before we can study the Bible profitably and intelligently, we must have some idea of what it is; how it came, and what its purpose is. Such questions we ask about everything we use. Why not about the Bible?

Information on these points must be gathered, as all other information, by getting the thoughts and views of other investigators, especially the most capable, and subjecting these to our judgment. We must have a view. Our view must be subject to revision. As we get more and more views are, by comparison with the views of others, especially those who see more widely than ourselves.

SOME OF THE VIEWS HELD.

One view of the Bible is that it is an oracle of God, prepared in Heaven by Divine wisdom, and passed down to man, to serve as a guide to life—a standard rule of faith and practice. There is truth in this view, for undoubtedly every student of the Bible finds it to be a communication from God. To this fact it carries its own testimony home to every sincere reader. This, each may, and ought to test for himself.

On investigation, however, it is found the Bible did not come to man ready made. There was a time when it did not exist on earth. Then it appeared gradually, part now, part again, until a period of thousands of years passed, before it was in the form in which we now have it.

Further investigation discloses the fact that there is a variety of literary forms contained in it. We have snatches of song; narratives of events in the lives of men and women, and of nations. We have broken records of their activities; reflections on actions and events, by poets, dramatists, statesmen, priests, prophets, philosophers. Indeed what we find in it are pictures of human life, under varying conditions, and in manifold aspects. The Bible, like all other books, was made on earth. It grew, as every other literature grew. This also is a fact beyond dispute.

Now these two facts, that the Bible is a revelation of God's thought of the true way to live a human life, and that it is also a selected literature of a race, are not incompatible.

"Read not books alone, but men, and among them chiefly thyself."