

ON YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS.

(COMMUNICATED.)

The present season of the year, when these Associations have just been holding their great annual assembly for the Maritime Provinces, appears especially suitable for some reflections upon their influence on the great work of Evangelization, and upon the relation in which they stand to the regularly constituted and recognized agencies of the various Churches.

The origin of such societies is undoubtedly a desire in the young men for an increased degree of personal religion such as that which brought together the youthful Wesley and his companions in his rooms at Oxford; but with regard to the latter movement there is not any occasion to fear that it will ever result in the addition of another to the already numerous churches which divide the protestant Christian world. Such a result would only be likely to occur were the members composing the societies of one denomination and seeking for reform in doctrine and in matters of form and ceremony.

With regard to the relationship in which Y. M's. C. Associations and the clergy stand to each other there certainly exists a very general impression and I fear there is some reason for it that they are by no means in thorough accord. Many of the young men themselves, on the one hand, have the opinion that most clergymen either entirely withhold it, or, at most, only give them their lukewarm sympathy, whilst some clergymen I believe regard these societies as undertaking an entirely supererogatory work. But besides these clergymen there are many others who are inclined to ask, is not all that such a society as a Y. M. C. A., can propose to itself to do, being effected by what have been hitherto the only constituted agencies—preaching, catech-

izing, prayer meetings, and clerical visitations. Such persons, both among clergy and laity, believing that the several churches are possessed of a sufficient machinery to carry on their work are apt to attribute the origin of the societies in a great measure to the ambition of aspiring young men who would endeavour by entering irregularly into the labours of others to arrogate to themselves an undue importance and to acquire an ascendancy and undeserved influence among their associates. Now it must happen in these as in all other associations that the men of greater ability, if they be at the same time possessed of that quality essential to progress in spiritual as well as in temporal matters, namely earnestness, must acquire a certain predominance and lead, but it appears to me that the societies by their constitution provide as far as possible against any such undue influence and ascendancy on the part of a few individuals. So long as the Associations are in a proper subordination to the regular ministry and to congregational organizations, there is reason to hope that they will prove a means of great good among those to whom the apostle John wrote, because they are strong and the word of God abideth in them, and they have overcome the wicked one, and so I for one dare not deem their work supererogatory. In all ages and in every country it has been the young men who have left the greatest impress of character upon their generation, and we should be thankful for the evidence which Y. M. C. A'S. afford of an earnest spirit of enquiry and a sincere desire to attain unto true wisdom among those of the present age. It may further be urged on behalf of Associations that they supply a really felt want. Young men in whom life and the love of its pleasures are intensely strong, are exposed to a degree of temptation to yield to the natural tendencies of their natures which those who have attained to riper years