

LEAGUE PROBLEMS

In this column we shall discuss such problems of the practical work of our Young Peoples' Societies as may be submitted to us. Your correspondence is solicited.

II.—All Ages Meeting Together

"We have no Junior League at present, owing to the lack of a suitable Superintendent. The President has brought all the children into our Adult League, so that our regular week-night meetings include various ages, from ten years upwards. Is this a good plan?"

Evidently you have knowledge of the benefits of Junior League operations in the "children" to look after them personally sometime. And we judge that it was not very long ago or your present "children" would be out of touch with your League. That you have a number of Juniors personally interested in your services is a cause of congratulation.

Another encouraging sign is that your President is sufficiently interested in the "children" to look after them personally, even if, as we infer, he has not the full support of the League members in bringing them into your regular sessions. Evidently his heart is right, and if his plan is not really wise, it may be but temporary. As a permanent one we cannot commend it, for several reasons.

1. Children cannot be well taught or properly trained if subjected to methods inappropriate to their tender years and immature growth. It is a mistake to treat a boy as "a little man," or a girl as "a little woman." They are children who may be grown into men and women if proper principles and plans of culture be observed and applied. Otherwise they may ever be dwarfs or prigs, and while the former is deplorable, the latter would be an even worse calamity.

2. The Epworth League cannot be efficiently conducted with children of ten years and under in its adult section. Little ones are out of place there, just as boys and girls in the Junior grades of the S. S. would be misplaced if put in an Adult Bible Class. Your whole adult League will be weakened rather than strengthened by retaining such young children in its membership. Your programmes must become juvenile if your ten-year-olds are to understand and profit by them. This you cannot afford, for thereby growing young men and women would be retarded in their development. An occasional union meeting between adults and juniors is an inspiration to all, but regular week-night meetings with all grades and ages together will surely tend to deterioration.

3. The homes of your people cannot afford to have the little children out late at night. We object to children of ten years of age being anywhere but under the parental eye when nine o'clock comes. Their best place is in bed. When the Junior League must meet in the evening, we insist on it being so arranged that eight o'clock may find the little ones at home or well on their way there. We have no hesitation in saying that even your regular week-night League service will be less profitable to your ten-year-olds than home and bed would be. That's good, old-fashioned sense.

Now, as to what is "a good plan?" It is regrettable that you have no "suitable Superintendent" for a Junior League. We conclude that your former Superintendent has moved away and has left no successor in office. But is it wise to conclude that you have therefore no "suitable superintendent?" We are confident that there is one person in your church with both gifts and graces sufficient for successful leadership of the young. Has an earnest, honest effort been made by your Pastor and League Executive to find this one? Or have you simply taken it for granted that there is none "suitable," and in consequence, have allowed your society to drop into a state of practical indifference to a Junior section?

If there is no visible person with outstanding qualifications for a "suitable Superintendent," why not organize a Fifth Department in your League, with several of your more experienced members on it as a committee to conduct the Junior meetings? That may be a wise and practicable course of procedure. The division of work and responsibility among several will lighten the burden on all, and at the same time strengthen those who participate. It is a mistake to conclude that extraordinary gifts are required to conduct a Junior League. With a heart of love, a fair measure of intelligence, and a willingness to do one's best in the spirit of prayer, a most ordinary Christian may lead the little ones into a life of devotion to usefulness for Christ.

We are sure you ought to have a Junior League. We believe you can. We trust you may say, "We will."

LIFE PROBLEMS

In this column we shall endeavor to assist our young people in the solution of some of the vital questions of the personal life. Your correspondence is asked.

II.—A Young Man's Difficulties About the Bible

"There are so many conflicting theories heard regarding the Bible that I hardly know what to think. Is the Bible God's Word in any unique sense? If so, how may I prove it true, and by what method may I get the most good out of it? As it is now, I read it, but I do not seem to profit much by my reading."

We submitted this problem, common to many thoughtful young people to-day, to Rev. Wm. Quance, Lambeth, Ont., and the following is his reply. It is profitable reading for all:

"Dear Young Friend,—Your questions are perfectly legitimate and natural, and the asking of them is a very hopeful sign. Let us look at your difficulties in order:

1. The "conflicting theories regarding the Bible." It is sad but true that one age may by its rigid, dogmatic definitions make difficulties for another. When, for example, such a definition of inspiration is given as to make the sacred writers the "mouth-pen-men of the Holy Spirit," or to say that the Bible cannot be trusted in anything unless it can be trusted in everything, that it cannot be an infallible guide, even in the most vital matters of religion, unless it be such also in matters of fact, of date, or numbers. This is to eliminate one of the prominent features of the Bible, namely, its human element.

But it is more to the point to ask: What is the purpose of the Bible? Why were men moved by an impulse which they believed to be Divine to write the books which we call the Bible?

In the Bible, all theories apart, we have the record of God's self-manifestation to man. Revelation and its record are not the same thing. Revelation is before the record. Revelation does not mean causing a sacred book to be written for the religious instruction of mankind. It signifies God manifesting Himself in the history of the world in a supernatural manner and for a special purpose. Manifesting Himself; for the proper subject or revelation is God. In what aspect, then, did God manifest Himself whereof we have a record in the Holy Scriptures?

To that question the reply is: "The revelation recorded in the Scriptures is before all things a self-manifestation of God, as the God of grace. In that revelation God appears as one who cherishes a gracious purpose towards the human race. The revelation consists, not in the mere intimation of the purpose, but more especially in the slow but steadfast execution of it by a connected series of transactions which all point in one direction, and at length reach their goal in the realization of the end contemplated from the first."

Now, it is this purpose of Divine grace at the heart of the great evolving movement of history, that is its vital force, and the record of it in the Scriptures gives unity and uniqueness to the Sacred Volume. For from Genesis to Revelation we feel that this book is a unity. This is a fact, and on this fact faith can rest.

2. "Is the Bible the Word of God in a unique sense?" The answer to this question is decidedly in the affirmative. Of course the Bible looked at from one side is human and natural. But the very same researches which bring out its naturalness also proclaim that it is supernatural, that there are realities through it the Spirit of God. They make it clear that the human authors felt themselves to be moved by the Holy Spirit. They knew that they were in the hands of One mightier and more far-seeing than themselves. The whole significance of the Bible is that it contains the record of the experience of men in their dealings with God. And for this reason the Bible must be eternally true. Nothing can ever interfere with its spiritual significance, for spiritual laws do not alter with the progress of the ages.

3. "If so, how may I prove it true?" The proof is seen in the effect. What is the influence the Bible always produces, whether on the individual, the nation, or the world? The effects, or results, are always in accord with the purpose of grace which God has caused to be manifested in the history of the world, and especially in Jesus Christ.

4. "By what method may I get the most good out of the Bible?" The Bible, like any other book, must be read for the purpose for which it has been written. That purpose is to "make wise unto salvation." There is in the Bible that which differentiates it from every other book; its spirit is different, it speaks to the heart, the conscience, the will, with an authority that no other book has; it finds us as no other book does. Hence we must approach it reverently, read it carefully, ponder it with docility, humility, and prayer.