

## OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.

This department is conducted by a member of the General Assembly's Committee on Young People's Societies. Correspondence is invited from all Young People's Societies, and Presbyterian and Synodical Committees. Address: "Our Young People," *PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW*, Drawer 2464, Toronto, Ont.

### THINGS WE SHOULD KNOW.

#### I. The Origin of the Shorter Catechism.

On July 1st 1643 there convened at Westminster an assembly of divines which for influence and importance ranks second only to the Council of Nice. This gathering was the result of a movement towards harmony in creed and worship on the part of the three kingdoms, that had its inception in the courts of the Scottish Church. The assembly met at the call of the famous Long parliament, which Cromwell some years later so unceremoniously dismissed. It was composed of one hundred and twenty-one English clergymen, and thirty English laymen, together with five Scotch ministers and three elders. The names of these eight Scotch commissioners should be known by all young Presbyterians, and are as follows:—Alexander Henderson, Rector of the University of Edinburgh; Robert Baillie, Principal of Glasgow University; George Gillespie, of Edinburgh, the youngest of the party; Samuel Rutherford, Principal of St. Mary's College, St. Andrews, Robert Douglas, who, however, did not take his seat; John Earl, of Cassils; John Lord Maitland, who, as Duke of Lauderdale, afterwards became the bitter persecutor of the cause he now warmly espoused; and Sir Archibald Johnston, of Warriston, one of the Session Court judges. The task these men had before them was no bright one, it being the preparation of a creed, a form of worship, and a system of church government, which might be used in common by the church in England, Ireland and Scotland. For nine years it sat and labored diligently at this noble work, and as a fruit of its labors, perhaps the richest and most abiding we have had since the year 1647, four years after its convening, that most wonderful compilation of Scripture truth outside the Word of God itself, the Shorter Catechism. This invaluable little book may be looked upon as the Godgiven outcome of circumstances and conditions eminently fitted for its birth. The troublous times dating from 1600-45, had been marked by numerous attempts to condense and formulate in easily teachable language the great fundamental truths and doctrines of the Bible. None of these however had met with general favor, though all helped to pave the way for the one we now so greatly prize. The Shorter Catechism was not the compilation of any one sect or branch of the church; it was the result of the combined thought of the ablest and holiest men in all the then existing Protestant bodies. Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents or Congregationalists, and Erastians, all united in its production; so that we find in its one hundred and seven questions the strongest thought of the Reformed Church, in a day when the Puritan faith had just emerged from the furnace of persecution, tried like burnished gold. Let the young people of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, next to their Bibles prize and study the Shorter Catechism. It has in it those elements that are productive of strength of character, and depth of spiritual life. It will give them a grasp of Christian doctrine that will enable them to read the Word intelligently, and will serve them in good stead as ballast and anchorage in these shallow days of shifting winds and cantish liberality. It was Thomas Carlyle who said, "The older I grow—and I now stand upon the brink of eternity—the more comes back to me the first sentence in the Catechism which I learned when a child, and the fuller and deeper its meaning becomes: 'What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever.'"

#### A MIGHTY GATHERING.

By the time this issue is in the hands of our readers the fifteenth International O. E. Convention will be in session at Washington. This Convention gives promise of being not only the largest, but the most interesting and hopeful of the whole series of phenomenal gatherings that had their inception now fifteen years ago. The most prominent characteristic of the Convention so far as may be judged from the provisional programme is the emphasis which will be laid on the deepening of the spiritual life of the individual members. The preliminary Wednesday evening prayer meetings will be devoted to this subject, and they will strike the keynote of all the following sessions. This feature is one which should give great cause for thankfulness on the part of all well wishers of the movement, since it is evident that the future of Christian Endeavor depends upon the spiritual phase of the work being given the leading and dominant place. We need have no

fear of disaster from the number of dangers that threaten the cause on every hand if only the Holy Ghost be given His place as controller, and His guidance submitted to in all things.

The Canadian Presbyterian Rally promises to be a great success. The Rev. Mr. Geggie from Nova Scotia is in charge and has succeeded in securing a number of good speakers from among our ministers and laymen to take part in the proceedings. Rev. Wm. Patterson and Rev. John Niel will be present from Toronto. Further news of the Convention will be given next week.

### BICYCLE NOTES.

REV. F. D. MEYER.

All the world is on wheels. Whether it be the busy thoroughfare of the great city, or the deserted market-place of a country town, you are sure within five minutes to encounter a bicycle. Stealthily, noiselessly, like the advent of the spring, the bicycle has covered the land. The young exquisite rides it for pleasure; the working man comes in from the village to his work in foundry or factory at six o'clock in the morning; the country postman, the colporteur, the local preacher, find it indispensable; women without limit, from royalty to the very servant-girls, all have learnt, are learning, or will learn, how to ride in some fashion this wonderful and useful contrivance for shortening weary miles, inhaling country air, and acting as a nerve tonic on weary brains and jaded systems.

I am told that in many parts of the country hotels that have been disused from the old coaching days are suddenly awaking from the sleep of fifty years and becoming the centres of bustle and business, and, for my part, I hail the bicycle as likely to attract women from heated drawing rooms, and young men from billiard table and tap room, into God's own world, to breathe His own health-giving air. In my judgment also it is likely to prove the solution to the serious problem of how to avoid the use of public conveyances on Sunday. For my part, I would infinitely prefer to see my congregation come on bicycles and tricycles, than that a crowd of omnibuses, trams, and cabs should be laid under requisition to bring my people to their accustomed places on the Lord's day.

Never till I commenced to learn to ride a bicycle did I so practically understand the failure in the moral world of which the Apostle Paul speaks in Romans 7. You notice other people ride so easily and securely, you talk with them of the using to remember or avoid, you receive with the utmost attention the directions of your instructor as to how to do it, you dream that you are careering over the familiar roads with swift and easy motion; but when you mount and attempt to realize your ideal, lo, it has vanished, the machine becomes unsteady, the wheels wobble to and fro, as likely as not you are precipitated to the ground. How often have I in such experiences recalled the Apostle's words, "To will is present with me, but how to perform I find not."

The other day a crowd in the street directed my attention to an auto-motor bicycle, into which some motive-power was introduced in virtue of which it sped lightly over the ground, needing only careful piloting; and it suggested to me a longing that into my moral nature there might also come some transcendent power which would do for me what I cannot do for myself. Oh, for the power of God to work effectually in the soul! Oh, that the law of the Spirit of Life which is in Christ Jesus might make us free from the law of failure and disappointment which so often attends our best efforts, and enable us to realize the ideals that beckon to us!—*Christian Endeavor*.

Mr. Gibson of Swatow (a son of the late Dr. Gibson of Glasgow, and an English Presbyterian missionary) gives the following remarkable vidimus, showing the growth which has been made by the Christian Church, during the century, in China:—

"In 1807 the work was begun.

"In 1843 there were 6 communicants.

"In 1853 there were 350 communicants; increase, 344 in ten years, or 34 per annum.

"In 1865 there were 2,000 communicants; increase, 1,650 in twelve years, or 140 per annum.

"In 1876 there were 13,035 communicants; increase, 11,035 in eleven years, or 1,003 per annum.

"In 1886 there were 28,000 communicants; increase, 14,965 in ten years, or 1,496 per annum.

"In 1889 there were 37,287 communicants; increase, 9,287 in three years, or 3,076 per annum.

"Taking the later years, from 1876 to 1889, for which we have the best statistics, and which are the best test of present conditions, we find that in these thirteen years the increase of communicants has been 24,252. But as these are communicants only, we may multiply by three to get the increase in number of Christian community. This is a very moderate estimate, indeed."