



"I desire to form a League, offensive and defensive, with every soldier of Christ Jesus."—John Wesley.

The Epworth League.

BY REV. DR. CARMAN,

*A General Superintendent of the Methodist Church.**

MORE effective and comprehensive provision for the spiritual wants of our children and youth has for some time been a deeply-felt and widely-acknowledged necessity in our Methodism. This is, indeed, a necessity that is more and more appreciated throughout the Christian world as the Churches become more and more awake to their duty, more and more alive to their privileges, and more and more aware of the meaning and scope of the call of God to the salvation of the race. The conviction that children and youth have spiritual needs is a strong point gained. The persuasion that Christianity in its excellency is for children, has its patiently instructive and social side, can lead youth into business activity for Christ, can even select and sanctify profitable entertainment and direct intellectual culture through mutual aid and improvement, is another very decisive vantage ground. To those who make religion mere dogma or ceremony, it is, indeed, a discovery that Christianity has a social side, or that its chief power and hope are the conversion and spiritual nurture of the youth. . . .

Already, and for a long time past, some of our faithful and farseeing ministers have perceived and felt this necessity; and in their own sphere and on their successive fields of labor have, with much effort and prayer, made the best possible provision to meet it. They have organized societies of their young people in connection with or outside of their Sabbath-schools and class meetings; by which those young people have found instruction, inducements to and nurture in divine life, healthful entertainment, proper amusement and practice and joy in benevolent and religious work. What an ennoblement is this! What an accumulation and godly direction of moral and spiritual energy! In some cases our active young people themselves have seen the lack, and in one way or another, with greater or less success, have attempted to supply it. Thus there has arisen quite a diversity of associations, with considerable variety of plan, rela-

tion and aim. These very voluntary and commendable efforts are proof of the demand. In the Methodist Church of the United States, of this same necessity and praiseworthy impulse, some half dozen associations of this kind had arisen, spread over mere local boundaries, and were extending themselves throughout the land, often instituting two or more in the same place and Church. To avoid confusion, distraction, misdirection of energy and even contention; and to secure harmony and unity of action, wise and effective employment of resources, safe instruction and doctrine, and loyalty to the Church and her operations, it was found desirable to seek the union of all the various societies into one, preserving the excellences of all. This was accomplished in the formation of their Epworth League, which is now rallying their youth to an intimate acquaintance with Methodism, a comprehension of its aims and responsibilities, a firm attachment to it, and combined and ceaseless labors throughout the nation to extend its doctrines, economy and saving power.

Our own Epworth League, so recently and so auspiciously introduced, has like design and hope. While allowing the largest freedom for its numerous and noble purposes and sublime work, it is so formed as to bring it into harmonious movement with the existing authorities of the Church, the pastors, the Conferences, and the Boards. It is not expected or required summarily to crowd out societies already at work within the churches; but it is desired that our young people, under proper direction, may adapt their associations to the constitution of the League; and so all, as speedily as practicable, be working for one aim and along one line. The Epworth League in its several departments makes provision for all kinds, forms and powers of activity now in exercise, or that are likely to be in exercise outside of our Sabbath-schools and general Church arrangements. Bringing fellowship, study, valuable practice and varied work, right entertainment and pure and practical piety in its hand, it commends itself to all; and promises the sweetness, strength and happiness that youth covets, that mature years approve, that the Church sanctions, guides and helps, and that God the Father Himself will abundantly bless.

The possibilities of this League in our Canadian Methodism are delightful and inspiring to contemplate. Organized with the greatest liberty of independent action consistent with the welfare of our Church—and certainly our young people in this regard, properly instructed, desire nothing else—it must raise up a generation better informed in our history, doctrines and polity than even ourselves; better acquainted with missionary and educational enterprises and taking more interest in them; better aware of the limits of the easily confounded territories of godly and worldly amusements, and of sacred and secular work; more appreciative of personal responsibility, and better versed in social Christian effort and evangelistic toil; in fact, more earnest, intelli-

*Abridged from article in the *Methodist Magazine*.