

CONCERNING BOYS

(By H. Fiddes, Captain 5th Vancouver Coy. Boys' Brigade)

BUSINESS MEN—A SOUND INVESTMENT.

The boys of to-day are the men of to-morrow. The men of to-morrow form the community of the future, and the community of the future will constitute Canada. As was well said in another connection at a recent luncheon in the city, "The most valuable resources of our country are not our minerals; our fisheries or our grains, but our human resources." Therefore, whether looked at from a business, community or religious standpoint, it is of vital importance that we conserve these resources, and see that they develop into a strong manhood, so that we may have a powerful and righteous Canada.

Business men look around for sound investments—not necessarily investments that will bring immediate returns, but will bear equivalent interest in the future for coming generations. Mr. Business Man, what better investment can you make than to invest your means, your time and yourself to build up a manhood worthy of the wonderful Dominion of which we now form part? Your reward will be in the knowledge that you have helped to give to Canada and the world strong men, clean men, reliable men, and that the credit and status of the Dominion have been thereby enhanced.

A Practical Suggestion for Boys' Workers.

Various organizations are tackling the problem of "getting hold of the boy." We have in our city Boys' Brigades, Canadian Standard Efficiency Tests and various unnamed Boys' Clubs. Each organization seeks to solve the problem according to its ideas, its accommodation and means. It appears, however, to the writer, that there is weakness and lack of unity amongst the various organizations. They are all aiming at one goal. Why not come together, RETAINING THEIR INDIVIDUALITY, exchange ideas to help each other, and devise some scheme of common unity? It was gratifying to see that steps were recently taken in the organization of an "Older Boys' Camp" to which ALL the boys of British Columbia were invited.

Now why not carry the scheme further and during the coming winter form a league, say in gymnasium work, open to ALL Boys' Clubs, irrespective of denomination or organization? The leaders of each Club could be invited to meet in committee and arrange a competition. We would suggest that the first year's competition be in "Free Gymnastics" (with or without music). This would give the smaller and financially weaker clubs an equal chance against the better equipped organizations.

"Positives" Not "Negatives" Needed.

A most subtle influence in the community to-day amongst our boys is the pool-room, and yet pool-rooms fill a place in many older lads' lives that no other organization has attempted to occupy. There are few more enjoyable games than pool or billiards, and it is only natural that a spirited boy, even against father's strict orders, should creep into a pool-room to have a game of "Snooker." There is a regulation forbidding any boy under 18 years of age to enter these places, but the rule is often observed in the breach. That the influence of many (although not all) pool-rooms is bad, few people will deny, but there is little use "Holy Willies" holding up their hands in righteous indignation, if they do not try to provide a substitute.

Amusement is an essential part of a boy's make-up, and it is useless for people to try to bring up the future manhood of our nation on "negatives." We need "positives." Instead of continually decrying the terrible condition of things, why do

those who are intent upon helping our lads to a better standard of living not get busy and provide substitutes. It is not the GAME of pool that is wrong. It is the ENVIRONMENT. Churches and other organizations would be well advised to provide Public Pool-rooms for boys and have them strictly supervised by sensible broad-minded Christian men. This would eliminate the influence of bad environment and would go far to solve the Boy Problem.

The Question of Dancing.

Another influence to be reckoned with is the Public Dance Hall. Perhaps the evils attendant on the "Merry Hop" are greatly exaggerated—perhaps not. Be that as it may, it does seem absurd that dances should start at 9 in the evening and continue until one and two in the morning. Why the late hours? Dancing is an excellent and most invigorating exercise. This was proved during the recent war when thousands of convalescents were helped back to health and strength by dancing lessons given by competent instructors. That any ban should be placed upon public enjoyment is a pity but we think that if dance committees would adjust the hours, say from 8 to 12 midnight, much of the criticism levelled at dances would be obviated, and much of the temptation to "wild spirits" avoided.

The antidote to possible harmful influences of public dances, is to encourage the old fashioned "home party," and "surprise party," or for societies whose aim is Community Service to arrange—even Dances (!)—for our boys and girls—BY INVITATION. Here again it is the ENVIRONMENT that counts. "Let joy be unconfined." It is not enough to condemn. Destruction will only leave us a bleak barren wilderness of discontent. Construction—by encouraging legitimate pleasures, in good company—even if these pleasures do shock the "unco guid"—will build up a happy contented manhood and womanhood. Let us be sensible and see the boys' viewpoint.

"OH, WHERE IS MY CHILD?"

The other day a distracted mother 'phoned the police that her little child was lost. After considerable searching the child was located in Stanley Park.

The anxiety that a lost child causes a mother might often be spared if each mother attached to her child's clothing a leather tag bearing the child's name and address, or if each child wore an identity disc on the wrist, similar to that worn by many soldiers while overseas.

A PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL REQUIRED.

The opportunities for swimming during summer in and around Vancouver are exceptional, but the facilities for swimming during the winter months are very limited indeed. It is a duty the city owes its citizens, that every boy should have the opportunity of learning to swim, and a fully equipped public swimming pool is an urgent necessity.

A few churches are blessed with swimming tanks, but many smaller boys' organizations have to work under big handicaps. Is the community and brotherhood spirit strong enough to influence, even at some small inconvenience, the more fortunate churches to assist their weaker brethren, by allowing them the use of the swimming pools certain hours each week? Many would be willing to pay a small fee to cover light, heating and janitor's expenses.