

Practical Plans.

How to Use the Reading Course

The best thing to do, of course, is to organize a Reading Circle, meeting on some other evening than the regular League meeting. This may consist of a dozen or even half a dozen members, who usually meet in each others homes, and carry on their work largely by the question and answer plan.

In some places, however, it is not deemed practicable to have a circle of this kind. In such cases the books of the course can be used to good advantage by making them the basis of the monthly literary programmes. Several members might be chosen to present brief essays, or read particularly interesting selections from the books. The books will also suggest topics for discussion and debate.

After a season of such literary evenings the members will have learned something valuable, and most of them will probably feel satisfied that the method is vastly superior to the miscellaneous programmes of readings and recitations.

Many Hands Make Light Work

A writer in *The Guild*, the organ of the Wesley Guild, makes some valuable suggestions on how to give work to members who might be inclined to take no part in the programmes. They will be equally applicable to Epworth Leagues. He says: "The plan I am doing to recommend has been put in operation in three different parts of England, with results which give me confidence in urging it. It is to assign to a given night one subject, and get the younger members to act in a group of six or eight, under the guidance of some more experienced person, who shall be the captain of the group. The subject chosen is viewed from different aspects, each being allotted to some member of the group, that it may be thoroughly worked up. Advice is given as to the books or parts of books to be consulted, and, if necessary, some oversight is given to the papers, which should be short, not more than five or six minutes in length, containing about five hundred words. The subject may be literary, theological, historical or sociological; the papers should form a series of short related studies, and the result should be a conference rather than a debate. Debates, as a rule, go in favor of the ready, rather than the fully-informed man; facts in themselves undoubted are often made use of in a very doubtful manner; the tendency is to seek victory rather than light; and the evening ended, there is an uneasy feeling that truth has watched the proceedings only from afar. In these co-operative evenings, on the contrary, no one is expected either to win or to lose, each is asked to work up thoroughly his piece of the subject."

"If from the present appearance of things, anything may be safely prophesied, the future will see a deep and general interest in social science, and can anything call more loudly than this for the thought of those young Christians of our day who wish to be useful; is there anything more fascinating, when once an interest has been set up, than the exciting story which lies under those dull words? And is a story still un-concluded, always "to be continued in our next."

I have just seen a number of hesitating young men, not at all used to public effort, and sure that they could do nothing of the sort, take part after the manner suggested in an evening on "Canada, Should Young Englishmen Emigrate There?" The sub-divisions were:

1. The voyage: Where you start and land, what you wear, how much you pay.
2. The country: What it is like.
3. Advantages in Canada.
4. Disadvantages in Canadian life.
5. The difficulties of life in England.
6. The case for staying at home.

One after another rose with his five hundred words; each had been given his share to work up, and each had been shown some sources of information.

My first evening of the kind was with youths who allowed themselves to be persuaded to take up the "Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson." Only one of them had ever heard of him, and I would not like to be called upon to state exactly what that one knew, but all having been set on right lines, one produced a five-minute outline of Johnson's life, another his personal appearance (quarrying for the purpose in Macaulay's well-known description of the brown-coated philosopher), a third brought forward a small selection of Johnson's most telling sayings; another told of the three most striking of his deeds; there were papers, too, on the humor in his conversation, on Johnson's friends, and the last of the group gave five minutes on his recent visit to Johnson's house in Bolt Court, Fleet street. I venture to say that to all these young men this introduced a new world, and one with treasure in it for their future.

With a slight change of personnel, practically the same band, at the close of a Sunday evening service, took the afternoon in the chapel, the minister presiding. There was a conference on repentance, coinciding with a season of great spiritual quickening in that particular society, and in turn these young men spoke or read briefly on the following subjects:

1. A definition of repentance (with a slight word of comment).
2. The three best hymns on repentance in our large hymn book.
3. Examples from the Old Testament.
4. Examples from the New Testament.
5. Some instances outside the Scriptures.

6. A personal experience.

Then we drove it all home and prayed. None of these young fellows were local preachers, but, as might be expected, some of them are now. Last year the young women in the Guild I now associate with selected as their subject for a similar evening, "Children," the sub-divisions being:

1. Remarkable things done by children.
2. Religious thoughts of children.
3. The humor of child life.
4. Wrongs done to children.
5. A board-school teacher's every-day experience.

The third section was included for girls' sakes; there is no need to be afraid of laugh; those who ponder Dr. Talnage's statement that the most solemn looking of his father's mules was the one that kicked five dashboards to pieces, will agree that there is no necessary connection between melancholy and goodness. The papers made a lasting impression on all, and were full of fresh and original facts, yet none of the readers were accustomed to this kind of service. Another evening was spent in considering the question of the unemployed, under the following aspects:

1. Statistics of the present slackness.
2. Former periods of depression.
3. The question of national action.
4. Alleviating and other schemes.
5. Unskilled labor; has it any chance of becoming skilled?
6. The haphazard in choosing a calling in early life.

If social science from a Christian standpoint is going to be the absorbing study of the future, and who can doubt it who sees how things are going—then such evenings as I have sketched, simple but sensible, and graded to the powers of the youngest, point the way to intelligent citizenship, and perhaps to public usefulness.

The fact that several voices are heard secures for the meeting variety and movement; at the same time the desultoriness is avoided into which things fall when half a dozen papers are read on half a dozen disconnected themes. All these papers converge; with many starting points they come to one goal and central thought, to the impress of the meeting is much more likely to be unconfused and lasting.

How to Reach More Young People

How do you include your list of acquaintances? By standing by and watching your neighbor enjoy life? No, you enter the circle. You meet your neighbor. You don't talk shop to a person the first time you meet him. You meet him on common ground. So we must secure friends to our League by catering to their interests, creating a common ground of Christian fellowship. Invite strangers to meet you and your friends socially in the church parlors or at home. Make each evening one of social intercourse, full of good things, so full indeed of the sweets of church friendship that they will wait anxiously for the second invitation. This done, you have driven the first wedge in arousing their interest. Show by your genial sociability that we in the church have a time and a place for all things which are elevating.

Having thus met and interested the strangers, let us next endeavor to help them. Urge them to enter your literary meetings, and make these rich and spicy; above everything else, make them modern. Perhaps you can offer physical training and exercise.

Having reached the minds and bodies of strangers, you have a common ground of friendship, and you can now go for their hearts. Many a successful business transaction owes its accomplishment to a good meal. In the same way the strangers, having feasted on the social and literary life of your church, will relish that which really makes the church and the League what they are. The lighter dishes will provoke appetites for the more substantial and the altogether essential part of our work—the production and cultivation of a true and pure womanhood and manhood, under the direction of the Divine Spirit.

Therefore, to reach and interest outsiders, we must be practical, and use the same means we employ in business, in politics, or in education. "We must know men and be known by them." If we know them socially and intellectually, their souls will enter into our work, with their accompanying inspiration to add to the general stock. Reach strangers in your social life, your intellectual life, your athletic life, your life of mercy and help. And the League, Methodism, and God will win their souls, their hearts, their all.