

Our Young People

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THE C. E. TOPIC—Sept. 18.

HOW THE WORLD IS GROWING BETTER.
 Psa. 37: 1-13; Eccl. 7-10.

BY AMOS R. WELLS.

One proof that the world is growing better is this Christian Endeavor Society of ours, with its more than 3,800,000 members, in all countries under the sun. What would have been said, even a quarter of a century ago, if one had prophesied that so many young people would band themselves together for Christ and the church, pledging themselves to daily prayer and Bible-reading, and to constant open testimony for Christ?

Another proof that this world is emerging from the darkness is the existence of the Hague Arbitration Tribunal. This great institution, by far the greatest and most Christian product of the nineteenth century, means much more than that the leading nations of the world have agreed to arbitrate such questions as seals and boundaries and church funds and claims for debt. It means that we are coming to see the sinfulness and folly of war, and are rapidly approaching the parliament of man, "the federation of the world."

The progress of missions is a third evidence of human betterment. All corners of the earth are now besieged by the hosts of King Emanuel. The cannibal Fijis have become gentle and devout. The midnight kraal is aglow with the light of the world. The stolid Oriental vies with the heroism of Wiclif and Bunyan. Lives by the thousand and money by the million are poured out eagerly in this new crusade, whose knights are found in every home where there is a mite-box.

A fourth token of the world's progress is the rapidly growing spirit of union among the denominations, a spirit which our Christian Endeavor fellowship has done so much to promote. Never before have so many denominations been seeking organic union with other denominations. Never before have Christians been so earnest in the desire that the churches shall stand together against the aggressive hosts of evil.

Politics are growing purer; that is a fifth token of the world's betterment. In national and local governments our rulers are coming more and more to recognize the Golden Rule and the Sermon on the Mount. We are thinking

more of the character of candidates and less of their ability merely to draw votes. We are examining measures less by the rushlight of temporary expediency and more by the long searchlight of God's eternal laws.

In the sixth place, the welfare of the masses is made, more than ever before, the assiduous study of the wealthiest, most powerful, wisest and best of men. Millions are lavished on popular education, on free libraries and art galleries, on public parks, on improved tenements, on sanitation. Cultured men and women are making their homes in the slums, to purify them by personal contact. The principles of temperance have never before been pushed so urgently, and, on the whole, so successfully. Man is learning how to be his brother's keeper.

Many more evidences of progress might be named, such as the growth of the Y. M. C. A., the renewed interest in Bible-study and the vigor of the Sunday-school. Everywhere the world is manifestly and gloriously on the upgrade. And it is all due, not to our poor human wisdom and strength, but solely to the power and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, blessedly working through the lives of his obedient followers.



THE POWER OF PRAYER.

BY JOACHIM ELMENDORF, D. D.

The spiritual life of the church has been in a low state for some time. This was felt by the pastor and by those most sensitive to spiritual conditions among its officers and members. Conversions had ceased and worldliness was dominant in the lives of many. References to this plight, and prayers for deliverance from it, in the closets, at the family altars and in the devotional meetings had not brought a change. Finally, after much consideration a day of fasting and prayer was appointed, the public services of which were to inaugurate a series of special meetings. The responsibility of making the observance of the day a realization of the scripture idea of fasting and prayer, was pressed upon the church until it was evidently perceived and felt by most of the members. They gathered in impressive numbers at the morning service and again in the evening, with convincing indications that many had mortified flesh and spirit in their effort to get nearer to God and obtain his blessing.

For weeks the sympathy of well nigh the entire congregation had been profoundly stirred for a beloved elder and his excellent wife, whose only son was in a rapid and hopeless decline. Presuming on the endurance of a vigorous young manhood, reckless exposure had occasioned the illness which was consuming his life. The most confident opinions of physicians that the end could not be many weeks away, communicated to the invalid, did not weaken his belief that he would live on and recover. This delusive expectation of the continuance of his earthly life, doubtless strengthened his aversion to considering and seeking the life everlasting. Although reared in a home of prayer by consistent Christian parents, who through his childhood and youth led him to the house of God, yet he resisted and rejected the truths heard there. After he left his home and its restraining influences, he rapidly became more than irreligious, and gave his strength to that "which destroyeth kings." And his grievous sins did not come back to him as memories to excite his fear and drive him to repentance,

but left, as their result, a spiritual deadness that seemed impenetrable by the loving strokes or threatening thrusts of "the sword of the spirit"—a moral insensibility utterly unresponsive to the tenderest overtures of divine and human affection. The repeated, most earnest efforts of his pastor failed to obtain from him any intimation of interest in, or anxiety over his irreligious state. While friendly and talkative upon all other subjects, any reference to that was met with unrelieved silence.

His manifest antipathy to any efforts for his spiritual good was an increasing distress to his godly parents. They knew his utter unpreparedness to meet his God in peace, and yet it seemed as if he was to be "driven away in his wickedness." Their former sorrow in the anticipation of losing their only son, sank out of thought in the deeper sorrow of the prospective loss of his soul. Their pathetic plea was, "If God would only save us from this greater grief, we would bury our son without a murmur, and bless the name of the Lord who gave and had taken away." Yet it seemed that this was not to be. While there was no change in his spiritual condition, his body grew weaker rapidly, until his mind lost its balance. Word reached the pastor that the invalid could no longer talk coherently, and he found him unable to think or converse rationally. Moreover, the physician said confidently that he could not rally from that mental condition before his death.

This was on the day preceding that appointed for fasting and prayer. At its morning service the pastor declared the invalid's condition and the doctor's opinion, but held that God was able to disappoint their fears and yet effect the dying man's salvation. He pleaded with every member of the congregation to give an indicated hour of the day to closet wrestling with the Hearer of prayer for this blessing. It is probable that no more numerous or importunate prayers were ever offered by the members of the church during any hour of its history than in that appointed one.

On the following morning the word of the physician was that the improvement of his patient was miraculous. The pastor found him able to converse rationally and comfortably, but more wonderful, found him waiting to ask and press the question: "What must I do to be saved?" Words could not express the interest and anxiety with which he listened to the pastor's instructions, or the fervor with which he joined in his prayers for the Holy Spirit's renewing and saving power. His physical and mental betterment continued and his religious experience deepened day by day. His sense of his sinfulness was most definite and distressing. He felt that his heart was too vile to be cleansed by the Saviour's blood. The pastor urged him to cast it down before him, and wait for the exercise of his gracious power. In their next interview he said: "My heart has lain before Jesus' throne since you were here. I fear he will not see it, and if he does, I almost hope he will not touch it, lest it defile him!" But never was his promise more literally fulfilled: "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh." He felt the change and was filled with gladness unutterable and love most glowing and constraining.

He who had been so "ashamed of Jesus" that he would not permit his name to be spoken to him, now testi-

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fied to his preciousness, and urged all whom he saw to give themselves to him for salvation and for service. His bitter regret was that he would not have opportunity to work for his Lord on the earth. Only to do this did he wish to live longer; yet his deeper desire was to depart and be with Christ. This was the meaning of his departure to himself; to the parents comforted with unspeakable comfort; to the pastor and to the quickened church, whose prayers had brought down the saving blessing upon him and upon many others, who at that time entered its communion.

All of these had learned in a way never to be forgotten that the "effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."



Some people act like a tonic or an invigorating and refreshing breeze. They make us feel like new beings. Under the inspiration of their presence we can say and do things which it would be impossible for us to say and do under different conditions.

One stimulates my thought, quickens my faculties, sharpens my intellect, opens the floodgates of language and sentiment and awakens the poetic within me, while another dampens my enthusiasm, closes the door of expansion, and chills me to the very centre of my being. There emanates from him an atmosphere which paralyzes thought, dwarfs expression.



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