

# Missions

WOMAN'S PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF MISSIONS  
OF THE NORTHWEST,  
48 MCCORMICK BLOCK, CHICAGO, ILL.

## Ideal Young Peoples' Work.

MRS. WALLACE RADCLIFFE.

**A TEXT.**—"Hitch your wagon to a star."

**A BETTER TEXT.**—"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."

Philippians, 3:13.

It is said of the ideal man, in India, that there are two; one is dead, the other is not yet born.

Ideals are illusive, now, a vanishing perspective of the past, again, an *ignis fatuus*, dancing ahead, never attained, disappearing when almost within grasp.

Lack of definite ideal and sentimental satisfaction with the past, are two common hindrances to fine work. A society, like a life, may have its "future behind it." The right using of things new and old, the testing of the utility of methods, not by their youth, or by their honored age, but by their results,—this is a problem in missionary work to-day, as in every other phase of life.

Amid much gratuitous advice on all subjects and the tendency of the times to moral and religious vivisection, a sensitive soul feels like taking its ideals away into a desert place, to be like some sacred relic, uncovered and wept over at times but not profaned by display, even to friendly eyes. Reserve about anything, has like big sleeves, gone out of fashion. "We know *all* and what we don't



know we can guess," said some one in The Little Minister. The knowing and guessing are all to be exploited in this day and generation, even on such a subject as missionary work, and one can only hope and pray that out of all the chaff there may be winnowed some grains of suggestion and inspiration.

If ideal young people existed, the millenium would be here. Indeed there would be no age then, so wise would be the young, so young in spirit and in sympathy, the old. But it is all as unlike that as possible.

These are real young people the church has to do with, diverse as the colors of their eyes and hair. They can no more be treated, organized, helped alike, than can all the patients of a hospital ward.

A method expedient and wise for one church might be fatal in another. A mission church, an old established church, a village church, a city church, has each its characteristics and needs.

The absurdity of running everything in the same mould in this matter is as evident, when you stop to think of it as putting the same kind of a bonnet on the head of every woman in a town.

**THE FORM OF WORK** must adapt itself to these real young lives, their possibilities, probabilities, tendencies, environment. A study of their time, home atmosphere and convenience, is essential, whether they be school boys and girls or older. There are young women in every church who can never be reached through evening meetings. Their family life, family traditions, social habits, are all against it.

Because they can not be compressed into the

straight jacket of an existing organization, must they be left without guidance?

Then there are real young people who change. Hearts may keep young, their possessors grow older. Sometimes they marry. The organization, even name, suitable at fifteen or twenty, becomes unattractive or unsuitable. A Daisy Chain of maidens of thirty summers is grotesque. They belong somewhere else.

Grading and growth are God's law in all life. There is a leaving of things behind that must be. There comes in most church life a critical time when some society would be better dissolved. An organization can become a prison. Such a crisis is rarely altogether pleasant, but discontent and inadequacy must be noted, met fair and square, that out of it better, broader work may result.

Real, "young persons" have that beautiful characteristic of youth, enthusiasm. They must be helped to consecrate this, at least one tithe of it, to their master's work. That these real young people, looking for a star to hitch their wagons to, are critical, goes without saying. The absence of the critical spirit is not the characteristic of home or social or church life to-day, neither is reticence in its expression (even among Presbyterian saints) a prevailing fact. So without catering to exclusiveness, nor to undue criticism of existing organizations, something to hold and help this class should develop. A multiplicity of societies is to be deplored, and wherever possible avoided. It is far easier to start a machine than to keep it running. There must be more than impulse or a vain desire to "run things," behind any new form of work that will

endure. There comes in the "guide, philosopher or friend," a real person too, not an ideal, who may advise and assist. She undoubtedly has ideals "hid in Christ" which she could not for her life publicly analyse and expound. Full of enthusiasm, this friend must know how to laugh, as well as pray. Missionary meetings need not be funereal and oppressive, as we with our tense nerves and burdened hearts so often make them.

She should take up this work, not because she has nothing else to do, not because she *must* from any human pressure, but because she loves boys and girls; above all, because she loves Christ. She feels she has a divine call to work in her own church.

She is not of necessity, far better if she is not, the wife of the pastor of the church. There are always women with time for from one to fifteen clubs for self-improvement and amusement (weekly not monthly clubs too); there are always women enough to run conventions and congresses and hospitals and charity boards with all the excitements of public work, of exhilarating combat with vice (or each other); for all associations for the relief of anything. Blessed be many such women to whom we all are truly grateful.

But why do not more women, with culture, tact and cheerful zeal, seek to know, help and love into greater service, the young men and women of their own churches? We all read of the woman, so active, useful and up to date, that when she died, they put on her grave stone, "This is the only stone she ever left unturned"!!

The only stone left unturned by many a capable

Christian woman is personal, telling work in her own church home.

The woman who tries, through her hidden ideals, to help these real young people to do some real work, will have her headaches and heartaches. It is no sinecure.

There will be times when the cistern of enthusiasm will be well nigh pumped dry—and patience and strength sorely tried.

She will be asked to give recipes for this or that result, but can only, like the old cooks, say: "A little of this and a little of that and the oven just right." No recipe can be given for work with an ideal. It never comes up to the ideal, the star-hitched wagon sometimes does not seem to move at all. It never catches up to the star. The forgetting, the reaching forth and the pressing forward are the main ingredients.

Ideal missionary work is work for Christ, which comes naturally as blossoms on a tree, a growth into responsibility which there can be no question of shirking, a work which is as essential a part of Christian life, as prayer and praise and sacrament.

It has come to pass that the expression, "he or she is not interested in missions," (prefix foreign preferred) is so common that it does not carry the stigma it ought and will *some day*—(I do not refer to the Judgment day.) May the time come soon when a Christian so talking and so living without interest in missions will be considered abnormal, off color, one whose sincerity if not sanity is questionable.

If missionary work including intelligence and gift is a growth, it is a growth from something—



That must be love to Christ, knowledge of His word and will, a quickening and growth of the spiritual life. This will be active, and must work for Him and should seek its first duty, with its own soul and its own family, in its church home, naturally expecting to find there place guidance, and usefulness. Many a mother, who wonders that her son or her daughter is not interested and active, is the unconscious stumbling block herself, because of her apathy and lack of intelligence and example. When the older Christian life is more symmetrical, less warped, and one-sided, there will be no question of the boys and girls. No Sabbath-school teacher or band leader can counteract the lack of spiritual home education. There is another extreme. A great interest in missions unbalanced by sweetness, gentleness in home life, grace in social contact, kindness of judgment and speech, and regard for others' rights and feelings, has alienated many a one, young and old in individual household and in the church, from this work. This lack of symmetry, lack of love, lack of courtesy, has killed more societies than any other one thing.

It is a weakness in young peoples' work to organize always exclusively missionary societies, emphasizing inevitably as such do, the raising of money as the object. To many there would be no appeal in the direct subject of missions. They must be led to see it as part of square, honest christian living.

It is wrong to organize them for the mere money getting. It is wrong to organize them to the exclusion of money giving.

The amount of money given by an organization,

called by whatever name, King's Daughters, or Sons Bands, Christian Endeavor, Clubs or Guilds, —the *amount* given is the *least* important thing, heretical as that may sound. How, when and why it is given, these are the main points. Teach to give because you can't help it, that living is giving, that the money giving is but the outward symbol of the heart's gift. Emphasize always that though the money gift may have to be small, the heart's gift, the life's gift, count most with Him who sits over against the treasury.

Compared to school and club dues, social affairs, athletic clubs, bicycle repairs and so on *ad infinitum*, there is little danger of the average young person giving too much, whatever his position in life. There is danger in his trying to get it out of other people.

Occasional entertainments may be desirable, they seem necessities in some communities; there are times when almost any means of "spoiling the Egyptians," seems justifiable.

Granting all this, ideal giving is the individual systematic gift. To think, to plan, to be ready is worth so much.

Anything that emphasizes the sanctity and un-resting duty of giving, is helpful.

Adaptability to circumstances must be studied and the dignity of "a penny a week with prayer," be made manifest.

The practical outcome of systematic giving is regular quarterly payments through our Presbyterian treasurers. Teach these young people their relation to these treasurers and to the Women's Boards, and the Board of Foreign Missions.

Teach them to be loyal, honest, prompt in religious as in secular business. More than one girl or boy has had his first training in keeping accounts, in writing minutes and reports in this work. The value and necessity of some Parliamentary Law is evident.

Personally, I believe in doing both Home and Foreign work in one society, emphasizing the difference as little as possible. Young peoples' work in the church is for Christian nurture, Christian nurture is for christian culture. The end of christian culture is christian work. Such work should be a training school in knowledge and sympathy of the individual church's work, leading to co-operation. Such work can teach something of the history of our church, while few subjects teach patriotism better than missions.

Music, poetry, biography, special talent of any kind from within or without, can contribute nothing of general culture but can be worked in, Bible study and prayer are imperative.

To teach the symmetry of the christian life covers it all, to make the spirit of Christ the one motive.

And so the five points of the star to hitch the wagon to are: 1st—Spiritual Growth. 2nd—Personal Responsibility. 3rd—Grace of Giving. 4th—Christian Co-operation. 5th—Church Loyalty.

This star, no *ignis fatuus* leading to swamp and danger, is a star, as of Bethlehem, leading to Christ himself, to whom be the gold, frankincense and myrrh, both now, and forever.

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Price, 2 cents each; 15 cents per dozen.