

back?" is personification. So is the statement: "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge"; but surely the myths of heathenism need not be ransacked to cast light upon language manifestly dramatic, and used with the one purpose of making the idea at once memorable and impressive.

The one test of these numerous and subtle references in certain commentaries to mythological data is to demand their historical evidence.

When reference after reference of this kind is met, the tendency on the part of untrained readers is to accept them as a proof that the writers of Scripture held these myths for truth, and were willing to avail themselves of their help in recording what only the Spirit of God revealed. The longer we study the Divine record, the more we see that its teaching is coherent, reasonable, and befitting man's need and God's purpose. The more we know of mythology, we see that between it and this revelation there is a great gulf fixed. In the one we are in the realm of reality, purity, light, and hope. In the other we are surrounded with the unreal, the impossible, the false, and the foul, and we decline to have them allied, or to believe that the eternal light needs to be gilded by the glimmerings of myths begotten of the night, and not of the day.



A Plea for the Y.M.C.A.

By CHARLES T. BATEMAN.

ONE of the numerous class of weekly journals depending for its circulation upon sensational articles recently announced on its contents bill, "Exposure of the Y.M.C.A." I bought the paper and read the "Exposure," only to find a rehash of the ancient criticisms against this organization, all of which have been answered by Time or refuted by those com-

petent to speak upon the subject. At the start of the Y.M.C.A., the objects were possibly interpreted on a circumscribed basis. A few of the pioneers might have thought that young men ought first to be prepared for heaven rather than for their life upon earth. Certain results followed from this teaching—Y.M.C.A. workers admit this fact to-day—but in no way commensurate to the criticism and obloquy cast without reason or logic by some speakers and writers.

The fairest way to judge of the Y.M.C.A. is by the men associated with it. Its founder, Sir George Williams, came up to London as a country lad from a West of England farm, and had to carve out his own way in life. At the close of a long and busy life he left behind him a record in the City that has seldom been rivalled. He was honoured and so is his firm. Go to Birmingham, and you find that the men who assisted to build the new Y.M.C.A. premises are respected alike by political friend and foe. They are men who stand high in city council, on the magisterial bench, or in the city's religious and philanthropic activities. What is true of Birmingham is true of other great provincial centres, whether north or south of the Tweed. Taken generally, the type is good. The character of the men controlling and assisting the Y.M.C.A. movement is an effective reply to much of the criticism now and again levelled against it.

When Sir George Williams commenced the first association in St. Paul's Churchyard, he had no conception of palatial buildings, not only at home, but in America and the Colonies. He comprehended the need of Christian comradeship, but had not then outlined its contributory channels. No one blames a pioneer that he does not see at the first glance all the beauties of the country he may discover. We honour the memory of Sir George Williams to-day inasmuch as he fostered and encouraged the auxiliaries afterwards associated with the Y.M.C.A. movement. He was no kill-joy. Neither was he obscurantist in respect to education and commercial training. As he became convinced of the necessity for widening the base

of operations, no one was more generous or loyal in providing the supplies or rendering personal service. Like all great movements, the Y.M.C.A. has been a development, each step taken cautiously, but as a rule in a progressive line. This policy has proved its strength.

A vital factor in the growth of the Y.M.C.A. is its cosmopolitan character. Reference has been made to its extension in America and the Colonies. Not only there, however, but in many parts of Europe, in India and the Far East, the Y.M.C.A. has been established. As a part of its development the separate Association was linked up with a federation, and then in time their representatives met for Conference. Here the wealth of experience was reported and sifted until the scattered children of the parent stock were contributing valuable lessons to those at home. This has proved one great source of its strength. The colonist is less trammelled by conventions. He makes short cuts to the heart of things, and by means of his environment grasps problems that the stay-at-home Englishman is oftentimes afraid to tackle. So the Y.M.C.A. movement has grown and expanded because of its world-wide experience.

Two directions in which the Y.M.C.A. has developed with great advantage are along the lines of education and recreation. The ordinary education of the schools may afford a good or a bad foundation for business or professional life. But the average young man requires more than this if he is to succeed. He needs a training on the commercial side. With considerable success the Y.M.C.A. pioneered in this direction. Other agencies have catered for the young artisan. The Y.M.C.A. has provided educational facilities for the young clerk, the assistant in a textile warehouse, and the beginner in a large commercial firm. One branch of the Central Y.M.C.A. in the City of London has, for instance, specialized in classes for bank clerks, and scores of such young men have, as a consequence of proficiency in the technical side of their work gained by attendance there, secured quicker promotion. Many City bankers have testified to the value and importance of such

tuition, and commended the Y.M.C.A. for its excellent results in this direction.

On the recreative side the Y.M.C.A. is equally strong. "Namby-pambyism," of which at one time we heard so much, has no meaning to-day as a criticism against the Association. There is, in fact, some danger of the pendulum swinging too much the other way, and of the Association members forgetting that recreation is not the end, but simply the means to an end. A healthy body is but an increased opportunity for useful service. With its cricket and football clubs, its harriers, its tennis, cycling, swimming, and other organizations, it provides recreative facilities second to no other similar institution for young men run on secular lines. This, too, with the approval and co-operation of the older men in the Association.

Some idea of the want the Y.M.C.A. has supplied is obtainable from its present strength. It is but a truism to say that numbers are not everything, but at least they convey the idea of solidarity as well as some measure of influence. To-day there are, roughly speaking, Associations in all parts of the world, with an aggregate membership of 841,498. Tested in this way, no other organization for young men has progressed to the same extent.

From the first the Association has endeavoured to maintain a high standard. Its start was the result of Evangelical impulses, and this fact has never been forgotten. Its basis and its programme are both alike coloured by its origin. We sometimes see its limitations, but these are due to its upbringing. It cannot with readiness adapt itself to a policy of opportunism. From the first it was a testimony to the Evangelical faith, and if we may judge the spirit of its leaders to-day, they have no desire to deflect it into other channels. On its business and philanthropic side it is strong, and if there is any weakness it is in the supply of cultured Evangelicals who will give its religious aims intelligent expression. Both in the Church of England and the Free Churches there are men well qualified for the task, and in the future the Y.M.C.A. will have need of them.

At the present time the Metropolis lacks adequate premises for central Y.M.C.A. headquarters. True, a suite of rooms in the Strand has been requisitioned since Exeter Hall was demolished. But not until 1911 will London possess a building commensurate to its size and world-wide importance, and to the varied opportunities open to the Association in such a city. When complete, however, the new home of the Y.M.C.A. will at least compare favourably with the palatial places in the provinces and the Colonies. On the island site in the Tottenham Court Road will be found club accommodation for at least 10,000 young men. Nearly the whole of seven large floors are to be devoted to the purposes of religious training, education, social and recreative amenities, and as club and hostel. Probably in no other centre in the United Kingdom will such complete Y.M.C.A. quarters be found. But utility and influence are the dominant notes of the Committee's programme. They desire to help the young Christian fellow to become a more efficient trader, banker, insurance broker, or textile assistant. For the sake of his faith they want him not to be content to play the part of an indifferent second to the foreigner, but, like the latter, to study to show himself proficient in the daily task. There is*nothing derogatory to Christian ethics in such an endeavour. It is but casting the net on the right side of the ship.

Apart from the educational policy is an attempt to provide a residential department for at least 200 young men who come up from the country to earn a living in the Metropolis. A large proportion are but youths who have to subsist upon their earnings. How they face this problem is one of the mysteries of a young man's life. If readers of the CHURCHMAN were set down in London with £1 a week as the sole income, from which they had not only to pay for board and lodging, but clothes and all the little etceteras that are almost indispensable, then they might realize something of the struggle. Given health and strength it is a fight, but if these fail it becomes a tragedy. What is the kind of lodgings and fare offered to him? He must cut his suit according to his cloth. Even where the landlady is respectable,

the accommodation is limited. She does not want him home before bedtime, and on Sundays he is often made to feel that his room would be preferable to his company. Supposing he has to pay 13s. or 14s. for board and lodging, he must purchase lunch or midday dinner for six days of the week. Sixpence a day is a modest sum for a midday meal, and such a meal is limited. Three or four shillings then remain out of the weekly wage as an unexpended balance. He must dress decently. He ought to pay into a sick club. He will require some recreation. Economize as best he can, the margin is small.

But the financial aspect is not the most depressing feature. In too many instances London lodgings possess no resemblance to home. The young fellow without relatives and friends is lonely amidst London's teeming thousands, and the very spirit of loneliness often tends to his undoing. To go in and out of the City, knowing only those in one's house of business, with no sitting-room but the public library, and its obtruding notices requesting "Silence!" is not an exhilarating experience. "The dreary loneliness of a great city" is a subject for the philosopher, but more than we imagine it enters into the very soul of the youngster straight from the cheery home life—if humble and circumscribed—of the provincial town and village. Just here is the sphere of the Y.M.C.A., and this new building in the Tottenham Court Road will stand with open doors inviting the home-sick and lonely young men to enter and find companionship, recreation, and inspiration. In its spacious entrance-lobby he will see the Academy bust of Sir George Williams, and in course of time may appreciate the significance and value of the Y.M.C.A. movement.

I may add one or two sentences to this eulogy of Y.M.C.A. work. The cost of the building will amount to between £160,000 and £170,000. There is still £63,000 to raise in order that it may be opened free of debt, and if any generous reader of the CHURCHMAN is prepared to help, the Secretary, Mr. Clarence Hooper, 346, Strand, London, will gladly receive his contribution.