



ATHLETICS AND RELIGION FOR CITY BOYS

WHILE nobody seems to have taken up the suggestion of a Western religious journal that Sunday baseball games begin with a religious service, the Evangelistic Committee of New York has put one part of this idea into effect among the city's boys. They have succeeded in mixing successfully athletics and religion, tho not on Sunday. This organization was spurred to action by sight of the fearful toll of boys this city pays as one of the prices of progress. A well-



A STREET MEETING ON SAN JUAN HILL, NEW YORK,
Such as are held during the summer by the Evangelistic Committee.

known educator who has taught in the public schools for sixty-seven years gives it as his opinion that "the unnatural and unhealthy conditions under which thousands of New York boys live and grow prevent their natural development, and that the New York boy has deteriorated morally and physically as the city has progressed." Remedial measures have been undertaken by the public-school athletic league, and the Evangelistic Committee of the city have been lending a hand. For two seasons, we are told by Mary Kendall Hyde in the *New York Observer*, this committee has held a series of field games. She writes:

"Every meet held under the direction of the committee, however, concludes with a religious service, and as a rule the boys become so interested that they are glad to attend the special meetings arranged for them in the tents, where they are instructed in the value of moral and spiritual health and strength and victory. A remarkable incident in the athletic events of the city is the annual field meet in one of the public parks, where seven or eight hundred boys from ten to sixteen years of age, representing 'gangs' of intense local prejudice, meet in friendly contest and unite in harmonious service of worship."

Another phase of its children's work is conducted in the "foreign" centers of the city. The spur for this work is found in the recent statement of a lately retired police lieutenant based upon the observations of thirty-seven years of service, that most of the crimes in New York City are committed by foreigners. Tent services have been held for Italian, German, Swedish-Finnish, and Bohemian people. We read:

"Some of these have been conducted in the very heart of the Socialist and anarchist communities; to offset so-called Sunday-schools where pupils are prepared to enter into class warfare, where the seeds of treason, revolution, free love, and atheism are sown, where children are taught to venerate the 'red flag' rather than Old Glory—the simplest and sweetest meetings are held for children preceding the adult services. In both sessions alike, the exercises open with 'America,' and love for country is instilled with love of 'our fathers' God, author of liberty.' At the close of the season one thousand children from various typical districts of the metropolis assemble to sing 'I will try to be like Jesus, G-double-o-d, Good'; children of all nationalities and creeds are taught gospel songs and Scripture texts and Bible lessons, and, while no proselyting is allowed, are urged to higher ideals of life and counseled not to abandon religious associations."

The part of this committee's work which takes cognizance of adults deals especially with the element known as "park-benchers." Mrs. Hyde writes:

"One of the startling features of the last census in New York City was the great number of persons who declared themselves without a home. One of the most perplexing trials of the census enumerators was the rounding-up of the park loafers and Bowery lodging-house idlers and those ne'er-dowells who spend their days doing nobody knows what and sleep at night nobody knows where. From that day when the first faint hint of spring is felt, throughout the burning midsummer heat, until the snow falls, park benches are constantly occupied, street corners harbor shifting crowds, all out-of-doors seems preempted by the vagrant idlers. Perhaps no city is more charitable to its loafers, perhaps no city is more lenient; yet it is the charity and leniency of indifference, the *laissez-faire* doctrine in perfection; 'so long as they disturb no one, let them alone.' Organizations administer charitable assistance; individuals ignore the existence of the unfortunate."

"A Western newspaper correspondent, recently visiting New York, observed that each person in the city seemed thoroughly absorbed in himself and his own affairs, and was apparently unaffected by any conditions he might meet; commenting that naturally in a city of nearly five million no one could be expected to be interested in any one or anything outside his immediate circle."

"It is to just these disregarded classes of people, just the people who sit or stand or wander aimlessly to and fro unheeding and unheeded, that the Evangelistic Committee of New York City has for six successive summers gone with a message of loving sympathy and brotherhood. Tents have been erected with special view to reaching the homeless, the heartless, the hopeless, the drunkard, the dissolute, the down-and-out, as well as the respectable man or woman who has forgotten God."

"In one corner of the downtown section of the city, aptly described as the dumping-hole of the world, a tent has been located each summer, into which wrecks of humanity drift from all parts of the world. This past season a letter was received from a man in Costa Rica who had been put on his feet and started on a better life three years ago in this tent, and now wished advice as to where he might purchase religious literature for distribution. Sailors just ashore stop on their way from near-by docks to the nearest saloon, hesitating between the brilliant opportunities offered at each street corner; attracted by the sound of music they glance in through the open flap of the tent, see comfortable seats, bright stereopticon pictures, and, finding it to be a 'free show,' decide to enter; men in the parks or streets are first drawn to a group who with cornet and speaker are holding a meeting out-doors, and the listeners are frequently persuaded to follow the speaker to the tent only a few blocks away; whoever they are, wherever they come from, however they happen to join the tent audience, they are soon listening eagerly to the sweet songs which remind

them of home, mother, wife, or sweetheart, and a better life somewhere behind them in the past; then in a few strong, well-chosen words comes the message that there may be better things in their life yet, both in this world and the next. Bronzed men of the sea, blustering longshoremen from the docks, bleary men from the saloons, dusty men from the highways, dirty men from everywhere; those on whose faces vice has set its mark, those whose trembling hands and faltering eyes testify to continued dissipation; those who from one cause or another have lost money, health, family, and position, and find themselves in the ranks of the lowest dregs of the city; one after another come forward for prayer, for some word of sympathy and encouragement and Christian counsel. When they sign cards for identification, that they may receive personal visits, again is repeated the sad address 'No Home.'

TO SAVE CHILDREN FROM THE STAGE

THAT CHILDREN who go on the stage rarely survive the temptations and artificiality of that life, but die young in large numbers, is the indictment framed against the employment of children in the theater by those who are trying to extend the adoption of the statute enforced by Massachusetts, Illinois, and Louisiana. In these States children under fourteen are forbidden to perform on the professional stage. Several religious organs are seconding the efforts of the National Child Labor Committee in urging this reform, and besides these denominational organs, *The Survey* (New York), which is the charitable organ of the Sage Foundation and other humane social movements, has given its support to the project. A lay journal has pointed out that under such widespread legal restrictions "The Bluebird," "Peter Pan," "Rip Van Winkle," "The Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Tempest," and "King John" would "suffer irretrievably in their presentation." *The Baptist Commonwealth* (Philadelphia) has no patience with the argument that children would thus be prevented going on the stage to prepare themselves for a lucrative employment. Eighty per cent. of American actors of prominence, it is pointed out, "began their life-work after the years of childhood, and few actors of the present day put their children on the stage." This journal continues:

"In the year 1895 there were employed on the stage in New York City 320 children under the age of fifteen years. These children were licensed by the Mayor with the consent of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, that society



EVANGELISTIC ATHLETICS.

A boys' meet in McComb's Dam Park during July, when religious services for the boys were held on the field after the games were over. And the boys stayed.

being satisfied in every case that the children were employed in theaters of good standing and that they were not subjected to unusual physical or moral strain. They were engaged in speaking or walking parts only. The conditions surrounding the employment of these children were as good as can prevail



AN EVANGELISTIC TENT MEETING FOR CITY BOYS.

Such gatherings, held in the heart of foreign settlements, are intended to counteract other meetings "where the seeds of treason, revolution, free love, and atheism are sown."

under any system of licensing, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children endeavored to protect the young actors in every possible way. If early employment leads to success, we might reasonably expect a fair proportion of these children to become actors of recognized standing, especially as many were already sufficiently prominent to have recognized stage names. The list of names has been compared with 'Who's Who on the Stage,' and has been examined by dramatic critics thoroughly familiar with the stage and the actors of the day, but of the entire 320 there can be found at this time, fifteen years later, only five who are on the stage in any capacity, and only one who has attained prominence.

"The remaining 315 evidently did not find their employment an open door to the actor's profession, but the records of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children show that a large number did find it the open door to a life of profligacy and immorality. The superintendent of that Society states that they have on their records many cases of girls who began as stage children and who finished on the streets; the records contain many cases of criminal prosecutions of men and women who found their victims in children of the stage whose surroundings were such that they were not merely led astray with ease but often they were willing victims.

"It is shown too that the death-rate of young and middle-aged actors is reported higher than that of brewers, distillers, railway employees, sailors, butchers, reformed drunkards, electrical workers, Army and Navy officers, policemen, firemen, common laborers, and men of many other occupations."

Mr. Francis Wilson, the well-known actor, defends the occupation of child actors, and has tellingly "protested against a view that represents the moments of joyous effort of the stage child as on a plane with the physical drudgery of the overworked child in the factory." His letter to *The Christian Advocate* (Methodist Episcopal, New York) is thus examined by the editor of that paper:

"He attacks the statements of Mr. Everett W. Lord, the