

Charity Work of the Y. M. C. A.

by

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Outlines:-

I Introduction.

II The Association in general.

1. Its relation to Christianity.
2. Its aims.
3. Its Growth

III Charity work of the Association.

1. Its Importance.

2. The Committee in charge.

a. Character and Ability of the Men.

b. Its duty to the New Students.

IV A suggestion as to how students may be kept from violating Sunday.

V Care of the Sick.

1. A few common contagious diseases.

2. Objections as to Prevention of Diseases considered.

3. Case of Typhoid fever at Manhattan in 1897.

a. Its lesson to the citizens.

VI Suggestions as to better methods of caring for the Sick.

1. State hospitals.

2. College hospitals.

3. Private hospitals.

- VII. Care of the Sick in the University and Agricultural College of Tennessee and its application to our Association.
- VIII. Advantages of a Private Hospital.
- IX. Conclusion.

Charity Work of the Y.M.C.A.

In studying the different epochs of history, we find each one characterized by some particular event - many of which have lived throughout all ages, and others which have flourished for a time, then decayed.

One which has continued to exist and grow stronger and more complex each succeeding year is that of Christianity; and this growth in complexity has caused various departments to arise, all following after one ideal.

Not many years ago, a new departure was taken along this line, aiming at the harmonious development of the three essentials which make a perfect man - Body, Mind, and Spirit. Such a work was undertaken by the young men of the land, and termed the "Young Men's Christian Association"

One of the various and, it seems to me, the most important divisions of this

Association is that for the relief of young men in need of help - the Charity work. While I cannot, in this paper, even develop this phase of the work as fully as it should be, having to exclude what the committee has done - its work in publishing the handbook, taking the census, finding rooms, boarding places, etc., - yet it seems best to ^{first} give a bare outline of the Y. M. C. A. in general.

The movement dates from 1844. From a single town - from a small group of men less than a dozen in number, has sprung this enormous movement which today is a vital part of every college in the United States; and not only of the colleges, but also of the principal cities of America, and not only of the colleges and cities of America, but also of the colleges and cities of England, France, Switzerland, Spain, Holland, Ireland, Canada and Sweden, and we hope it can soon be said of every city in the world.

The Association ^{believes} that weakness in any one of the three above mentioned essentials in any man, necessarily implies lack of the greatest strength possible in the other two.

The Association then has a world of work to accomplish. For what proposed reform beneficial to mankind is outside its sphere of work? While it does not include any of the political questions of the day, it aims directly at the life of those who in future years are to make the laws, and by educating them teaches them that life's purpose is a brotherly feeling between men; it is living not for self but for "myself."

Let us now turn to that department of our work spoken of in the beginning, and for the rest of our time consider what are the possibilities, and what are some of the future problems with which it has to grapple. It has already been stated that this is one of the most important lines of work in connection with the Y. M. C. A. To me it seems the most important, because it makes the new students feel at home as soon as they arrive at College; because it assists them in finding rooms, boarding places, and in getting familiar with the college and with the ways of college life; because friendship is the strongest tie that binds student to student,

and friendship can be won in no better way than in helping those about us; because it shows Christianity applied to our everyday life; and because it has to do with the many sanitary reforms which are being spoken of so much at present.

We will glance first at our committee-men. What kind of men does it require? This question can best be answered by finding how the work is to be conducted. John R. Mott, has named five things necessary to a real live committee. They are:-

1. Definiteness,
2. Comprehensiveness,
3. Continuity,
4. Power,
5. Speed.

In the first place the committee must find just what their work is. Having found it, they must cover the ground thoroughly, which requires that they stand united in their work - well organized. This is where they gain their power - through organization. Last, but not least, if the above four are well in hand speed will come naturally. The one end

towards which we are to work is to gain the young man for Christ. While our present actions toward him should be carried on with love and earnestness, and while much of the work has to do with questions out of this direct line, yet the ultimate result is to lead the man into a better life, - and allow me to say here that if our actions are not the result of a love for our fellow student, our work will be of no avail. Just as the men are starting to college is the time when they are most easily influenced for good or for evil, and if we are to lead them to the better life, there is no time to waste, as temptations come to many as soon as they step from the train.

Let us, for a moment, look at the work of the New Student Committee here in our own college, and for the sake of clearness we will take the new student just as he arrives. If we only had the power to read in his mind his thoughts of home, of parents and all the associations he has left, probably for the first time in his life; if we could only know the ambition to which he aspires - how lonely he felt as he stepped from the train, without a

friend in the city, and if we could only realize the temptations which would beset him for the first month of college life, probably we would not so reluctantly pass him by without some word of greeting. Yes more: if we could realize all these, and know that his motives were the best, our hearts would be found to his in sympathy.

As it is, our lines are separate. What is needed is a kindly action that will at his very start in life, show him that there are persons whom he can trust, and who are willing and glad to help him along.

Even after his acquaintances are formed, we cannot cease to watch him. There are times when he will need help in his studies; when he has the "blues", and one slight word of encouragement just at this time is of inestimable benefit.

Students coming to a strange place to attend college, always find Sunday one of the most "lonesome" days they have, and as a rule a great many are apt to get among the wrong class of associates; to stroll around over the town; to spend the day in mere idleness;

or in other ways which to say the least are not at all commendable. Confined shut up in one small room, no one in the town with whom they are acquainted, and away from home, is it any wonder that they resort to such things? If the Association had a building in the town, conditions would be bettered, as the boys could then go to the reading rooms and entertain themselves. I am aware that there are persons who would hold that even this would be sacrilegious, and these will probably think the following suggestion much more so, but when we consider the consequences, their objections will not be justly sustained.

In some of the colleges in the United States, the professors and their wives and the married ladies of the town, have tried the plan of opening their parlors to the students on Sunday afternoons, giving them access to their libraries and such other comforts as they are accustomed to have at home. Such action has had the desired result. It has made the students feel at home among the professors and brought them into more intimate relations, and I have been told that

not a single one of these students ever abused their privileges. This is merely a suggestion, but I would at least like to see such action tried here. While the students might not avail themselves of these advantages at first, I believe they would before long, and it would help them in more ways than one.

Another phase of charity work of the Association is that of aid in times of sickness. As is the case every year, contagious diseases are sure to break out in college; not always serious ones, but those which nevertheless, require care, and here comes in the work which many of the "practical" people would call the "practical" work of the Association. As a matter of fact; however, it is all practical, though this may be more potently so than the rest.

In such cases as mumps, measles, chickenpox, etc., the question arises whether it is not best to let the student take them instead of trying to keep him from taking them; or whether it is not best to help spread such diseases, that can only be had once and which affect persons less, the younger they are. That

many years ago, the thought among people generally was that it was best for them to get these diseases as early as possible in life. Opinions today are changed; We will find people yet trying to argue the above for fear the person will get them when he grows older. We may even find some physicians arguing thus. You may question half a dozen doctors about some common disease, and they will not all give you the same answers. Neither will they give you exactly the same medicine to cure that disease; but the prevalent idea among doctors and others seems to be towards the prevention of the spread of such diseases.

While they do as a rule affect older persons more than those who are younger, yet those older in life, seldom, - very seldom have such diseases. Again, when we consider that more persons die from measles every year in the United States, than from that dreadful disease smallpox, it seems that it is our duty to prevent the spread of measles as far as possible.

Some may say there is no reason for students to get sick if they will only

care for their health properly. This objection has no force whatever, for we know that students do take sick, whether from neglect of healthful conditions we cannot say, but when one attempts to diagnose the case of each student, he will soon find it an impossibility and all that can be done is to lay down some of the most important general principles, hoping that the student body as a whole will follow them.

While it is true that very few deaths have resulted from contagious diseases here at the K. S. A. B., there have been many cases of sickness, all of which tend to throw the student behind in his studies, and many times have forced some to leave college.

In such diseases as scarlet fever, or typhoid fever, there is no question as to what should be done. Dr. Surber of Perry, Kansas, tells us that the germs of Scarlet fever will remain on the walls of the house for considerable length of time, and after the patient has recovered, the room should be thoroughly fumigated, as it should.

142
be also for all contagious diseases.

In 1897, when the Typhoid fever broke out at Manhattan, some became suspicious of the hydrant water, others of the college sewerage system; yet many of them continued to drink their own well water, not taking the trouble to boil that.

In regard to the hydrant water of the city, it was stated on good authority* that it was properly protected and was without doubt perfectly safe. In case of the college sewerage, suffice it to say that chemical analyses and experiments were made by professors in the college of several of the wells nearest the sewer and no trace of pollution could be found. Neither could the sewage soak into the ground and enter the veins of other wells, as the soil underlying the larger part of Manhattan is a stiff grumbo almost impenetrable by water and the germs would simply remain in the ground and die while the water would rise to the surface and evaporate.

One thing, then, yet remains. As

Wm. Campbell, Manhattan

Dr Little

typhoid fever germs are carried only by the water, it is evident that the wells must have been the cause, and to have enforced an order that everyone should cease using well water or boil it before using would have prevented its spread.

Estimating the loss of each person who died in 1897 at \$5,000. (which is the sum juries usually allow in case of death from accident,) and multiplying this by the twelve or more persons dying from this disease in that year, we have at least \$60,000. to say nothing of the expense of doctoring the fifty-four cases in the city. No excuse, then, as to the expense of prevention will hold.

Now what is to be learned from this one lesson of negligence? The truths which it teaches are many, and as such cases occur more than once in a lifetime, the next one that comes whether mumps, measles, scarlet fever, typhoid fever, diphtheria or what, we must be able to meet it and check its course. How are we to do it?

State hospitals have been suggested. Another suggestion is that of college hospitals, either in charge of the college, with the

1464
professor of physiology, or an employed M. D.,
or left in the hands of the Y.M.C.A. of the
college wherein it is situated. The college
hospital seemed the most plausible of the two.

In the University and Agricultural college
of Tennessee, the Ladies Auxillary took up this
work of caring for the sick, each one being
taxed one dollar per year for its support. At
first, an old condemned house was prepared,
thoroughly disinfected and cleaned, and made
suitable quarters for the time being. The
benefits began to be revealed to the people,
and the town became very much in sympathy
with the work. Later a \$2,000 were raised
from subscriptions from the people of Tennessee
for the erection of a Y.M.C.A. building and the
work was given to the Association. This
structure contained a suite of rooms arranged
conveniently in a quiet part of the building,
fitted with hospital beds, medicine case, flowers
and such other arrangements as would add to
the comfort of the patient. They took not only
Y.M.C.A. workers into this hospital but also those
who do not belong ^{to the} association and thus
gain more members. If a student is unable.

to pay his hospital expenses and doctor bill, the association sees that they are paid. They have no trouble whatever along this line, as all who can possibly pay do so gladly. The benefits have proved to be of inestimable value, not only to those who are cared for, but to the Association, the College and the city as well.

This line of work cannot be confined to the ladies auxiliary here, it seems, but must be taken up by that part of the association whose duty it is to look after the sick.

Yet this is something which cannot be obtained immediately here, but towards which we can work. In the meanwhile, other arrangements must be made. "Small beginnings have great endings," so we can make a small start at first, and work towards greater ends, and I believe the place to start is in some good private house. This surely is within the reach of the Association. The Y.M.C.A. could rent two or more rooms to be occupied by those needing nearly constant care, and could possibly obtain them at

a reduced price, as they would not be occupied at all times of the year.

Of course, the rooms must be well furnished, have good ventilation, and be situated in a quiet locality. The lady of the house would probably act as nurse, when none of the Association boys could assist, and could be paid for her services. I have at present two or three good houses in mind, close to the College, where there would be a probability of obtaining such rooms, and there are probably many more, as I have made no inquiry for any such houses whatever in regard to the matter.

Such a house would have many advantages.

(1) It would be of great benefit to the committee itself as it would save it immensely time over the town visiting the sick; they would know at once where to go.

(2) The attending physician would no doubt gladly welcome such a change, for then he would have his College patients altogether in the same house.

(3) The committee could be assured that

the sick were in good hands, even when none of the Association boys were there.

(4.) The parents of the sick ones would be thankful that their children were being so well cared for away from home.

(5.) It would bring people to know more than ever the use and work of the Y.M.C.A.

(6.) It would benefit the association by bringing more boys into it.

I have in mind half a dozen boys, even this year, when the measles were raging in college who could have been placed in just such a hospital where they could have been taken care of with much more advantage and ease both to themselves and to the New Student Committee also. One of these was placed in a private house in the city where better treatment and more comforts could be had than were in his room. Two other cases, not of the measles however, were taken care of in the doctor's hospital in town. I feel safe in saying that at least this many students need constant care from one to four weeks every year while in college; and when the lives of six or more students are in danger every

year, is it right that the committee should hesitate longer in regard to this matter?

Some years there will be a larger number who will need constant care, especially when diseases of a more serious character break out in College.

Several improvements bettering the sanitary conditions of the town have been made quite recently, such as the Manhattan waterworks. One physician has stated that this has more than saved the cost of construction simply by reducing sickness. The benefits of such works could not be realized until it was tried. Neither will all the benefits of a college hospital or private hospital be known until one has been established.

Such a hospital would not decrease the deathrate among the students, but it would decrease the average time of sickness, besides giving them better privileges than the association can at present afford.

Such in brief is one of the lines of development which I hope to see the New Student Committee carry forward within the next year.

When the wants of a private hospital are seen, it may then be possible, if growth demands it, for the regents to arrange for a real college hospital. If such arrangements cannot be made, the committee must in some way find a plan to carry on the work; possibly by an enlargement of the private hospital, until the Association obtains a building where a great many more advantages and privileges to the student can be granted.