

**GOOD-LITERATURE  
COMMITTEES  
AT WORK**



By **AMOS R. WELLS**

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**United Society of Christian Endeavor,**  
BOSTON AND CHICAGO.

# Good-Literature Committees at Work

BY

AMOS R. WELLS

Managing Editor of *The Christian Endeavor World*



UNITED SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR

TREMONT TEMPLE

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## GOOD-LITERATURE COMMITTEES AT WORK.

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**The Need of the Committee.** — Christian Endeavor is a religious and not a literary society. Nevertheless, Christian Endeavor should recognize the importance of good books and periodicals, and aid in every feasible way the mental growth of its members, without sacrificing the religious to the literary aim. Indeed, the work of the good-literature committee, if it is properly carried on, will quicken the spiritual life of the society. It will do this by giving the members keener minds and broader views, and inspiring them with the noble thoughts of earth's greatest men and women. As will be seen in many parts of this pamphlet, the work of the committee has also a well marked and thoroughly developed philanthropic aspect. The committee exists not only to get good

from books and periodical literature, but quite as much to do good with these to others.

**The Make-Up of the Committee.**—Two qualities are to be sought in those that constitute the good-literature committee. So far as possible all its members should be bookish, fond of reading, skilful in the wise choice of what they read, and enthusiastic in presenting to others the claims of good literature; but also it is quite as necessary that the committee have the executive faculty, and be able to conduct its work in a businesslike and effective manner. One or two members may be placed upon the committee, even though they are of inferior literary judgment and are deficient in literary enthusiasm, for the purpose of increasing their liking for good books and bettering their tastes.

**The Waste of Good Literature.**—It is the common experience in every home that periodicals and often books accumulate with astonishing rapidity. Where they are not thrown away or burned up,

they are usually stored in the attic to be eaten by the rats or uselessly to moulder away. One object of the good-literature committee is to prevent this waste. A use can be found for all kinds of Christian reading-matter, as well as for everything that is pure and elevating in the productions of the secular press.

**Definite Calls.**— In the work of collecting for charitable ends the good literature of the community, that it may not go to waste, our committee cannot be too definite. If it merely issues a call for the books, pamphlets, and periodicals with which the Endeavorers and church members are through, it will receive a very meagre return; but if, on the other hand, it selects some particular object, some institution, needy church, or individual, as the recipient of its bounty, and adds this statement to its appeal, the response will undoubtedly be more generous, especially if some interesting fact regarding the proposed beneficiary is added to the call. The committee may well print a placard stating the need of good literature and the

purpose for which it is desired, and keep this placard standing before the eyes of the Endeavorers in the prayer-meeting room.

**Literature Exchanges.** — For years there has existed in the Chicago Christian Endeavor Union a most useful good-literature exchange. Its address is 1122 Association Building. Its manager receives from all parts of the country requests for good reading-matter for the use of the poor and of others that need it, and also receives from societies and individual Endeavorers statements of what literature they have to give away. Then the two classes are put in communication. Such an exchange might be put in operation in any Christian Endeavor local union.

**For Prisoners.** — Somewhere near to every society is a jail or a State prison, and there is opportunity for a magnificent work in furnishing these prisoners with good reading-matter, which is nowhere so thoroughly appreciated as behind prison walls. Do not think that just anything will do; the prisoners will soon resent a



course of ancient newspaper files, tattered Sunday-school papers, and torn copies of *Godey's Ladies' Magazine*. Give them the best, for they need it if they do not deserve it, and though it should not be all religious, sprinkle through it a goodly amount of noble, religious reading. Read yourselves what you give the prisoners, so that you can talk over the articles with them afterwards, and thus form an acquaintance which may win your way into their hearts.

**For Soldiers and Sailors.** — On board ship and in army barracks there is little money to buy good reading-matter, but, on the other hand, there is ample time for reading, and there are minds eager for the best. If the good-literature committees would gather up the periodicals and books that are lying useless in Christian homes, this standing need might easily be met. Miss Antoinette P. Jones, Falmouth, Mass., will always be glad to give addresses of persons who will see that good literature is put in the hands of sailors, and for the

soldiers you have only to address the chaplain of the nearest army post.

**The Barber Shops and Railway Stations.**— Any place in your town where men have to wait continually is an excellent depot for reading-matter. One of the best of such places is a barber shop, because here men always read while waiting their turn, and the reading-matter provided by the barbers is usually nothing but the poorest of the dailies and the comic weeklies. If something more uplifting is provided, it will be read, as abundant experience of Endeavorers has proved; and the barbers are always willing to have you add to their resources along this line.

The engine houses are other good places, and so are the boot-black stands. One of the most useful spots is the railway station, where so many thousands spend weary hours every year. Many instances of good accomplished by such means are recorded. Care must be taken, however, that no old numbers of periodicals and no antiquated books be permitted to remain in the wall pockets or other repositories

at these places. Everything should be fresh and attractive.

**In the Park.**— Remembering that the parks are favorite places for resting and lounging, many good-literature committees have put pockets on the backs of the park seats. These pockets are of wood, with tops that protect them from the rain, and they bear a legend indicating their object. Inside they are well stocked with good reading-matter kept fresh and varied.

**The Committee Stamp.**— The good-literature committee should obtain a rubber stamp for marking plainly whatever pieces of reading-matter it sends out—to the hospitals, parks, railroad stations, and the sailors far away. These stamps should read “From the Good-Literature Committee of the Christian Endeavor Society of .....Church, .....(City), .....(State).” Such a mark will be a standing advertisement of Christian Endeavor, and will give the periodicals a beautiful meaning.

**Prepay Freight.**— It is always to be understood in sending reading-matter to any

worthy object that the postage or the expressage or freight is to be prepaid in full. In every case, probably, the persons to whom you send would be unable to pay the cost of transportation. Besides, sometimes the distance is so great that it does not pay to send the literature at all, since it would be cheaper to buy it on the spot.

**For Hospitals and the Sick.**— Bright scrap-books filled full of interesting reading and pretty pictures will be welcome at any hospital, old folks' homes, or similar place. It is a good plan, in preparing these for the sick, to fasten the pages together only four at a time, so that they will be light for the feeble hands to hold. Classify the clippings for such leaflets, making one a poetical collection, another a collection of jokes, and so on. It is a good plan, also, to paste clippings of an entertaining nature on fans, covering the entire surface. These, also, will be found useful in hospitals or in the homes of the sick of the congregation.

**A Scrap-Book Evening.**— The good-literature committee will find it very pleas-

ant, if it has made a collection of clippings which it wants put together in scrap-books or other shape, to set the entire society to work at the task. Arrange long tables with brushes and large vessels full of paste. Part of the company will paste the clippings upon sheets of paper, which are afterwards bound. Others will sort the clippings. Still others will trim them. Perhaps you will have piles of papers for others to search with scissors for good material for scrap-books. By the end of the evening all your material will have been worked up, and you will have had a capital time to boot.

**An Envelope Library.**— Take stout manila envelopes and number and catalogue them like the books of a library. Put into each some interesting clipping or set of clippings. Into one will go a delightful and profitable story. Into another will go a little collection of poems, comforting in sorrow. A third will contain a number of humorous articles. A fourth will hold two or three of the best missionary articles you can obtain. Perhaps the majority of the

envelopes will have good stories or bright essays.

Next, obtain a set of "subscribers" to the library, there being, of course, no charge. Get as many old folks and sick folks in your list as you can. Arrange these in the most convenient order, and let each pass the envelope on to the next as soon as its contents have been read. When the envelope returns to the committee, new clippings will be inserted, and it will be sent again on its journeys.

**A Clipping Library.** — One of the most useful modes of using clippings is to arrange them with a view to their service in preparing for the prayer meeting. Classify them in envelopes, marking each envelope with a topic likely to come up in our Christian Endeavor meetings, such as prayer, heaven, sin, salvation, Bible, missions, temperance, pledge, faith, happiness, truth. As the clippings come in, prose and poetry, place them in their appropriate envelopes, and you will soon have a choice treasure of prayer-meeting thoughts ready

to help out the younger members and those that are inexperienced.

**Good Sunday Reading.** — The Sabbath is generally a day of special loneliness for all who are shut in, both the sick and the aged. They are unable to go to church, and since probably many of the family go, they feel a sense of isolation. If the good-literature committee will take special pains to remember these shut-in friends on the Sabbath, providing them with suitable Sunday reading, and taking it to them with a cheery word, they will contribute much to their own enjoyment of the Lord's Day.

**Furnishing Readers.** — It is not enough merely to furnish books and other helpful reading-matter. In the case of many sick and aged persons it is quite as necessary to furnish readers to go along with the books. Many young people with clear voices, sunshiny manner, and ready sympathy, would be a rare blessing in the sick-room, and by the chairs of the aged, and if the members of the good-literature

committee should enlist such Endeavorers in this beautiful service, and systematize the work, they would do a great kindness not only to the beneficiaries, but also to the young people who are sent forth on such errands.

**Books in Common.**—It will be a genuine service, especially for those members of the society that are not blessed with many worldly possessions, and also for the younger and less experienced readers, if the good-literature committee prepare a catalogue of all the books of the community that are accessible to any careful borrower. Of course a personal canvass will be necessary; and of course, also, the list should contain only the best books. I would recommend the discarding of fiction, and the selection only of standard works not easy to obtain but of especial serviceableness.

The committee should make it its endeavor to put in communication with the store of good books thus generously opened up, only those readers that are in earnest and honestly desirous of increasing their



knowledge. Applications for the books should be made to the committee, who should obtain the books, thus becoming personally responsible for them, and return them after the borrower is through with them. There should be a system of fines for the sake of repairing any damage, or making good any loss ; and possibly there should also be a membership fee, that the books may be more valued by their readers.

**Literature Tables in Churches.**— Every church should have a literature exchange, and these are especially valuable where there is no public library or reading-room. A table should be placed in the church vestibule, and a placard above it should ask the church members to bring to the table any periodicals they are through with, and at the same time it should give permission to any one to take from the table for home reading whatever he pleases. There is no obligation to bring them back, but whatever remains at the end of the month is sent away to some good object. The Christian Endeavor

good-literature committee may easily set this plan in operation, and keep it going.

**Sermon Extracts.** — A very helpful and pleasant bit of work for the good-literature committee is the collection of bright, comforting, instructive extracts from the pastor's sermons, and printing them for distribution through the congregation. The extracts may be made from the pastor's manuscript, if he uses manuscript, or, if not, some shorthand reporter may take notes. The printing-press may be used, or some duplicating device, and a half-tone portrait of the pastor may be bound in at little cost. An attractive pamphlet may thus be prepared which, if given away, will serve to advertise the church in many homes, or, if sold, will put many a dollar in the society or church treasury.

**The Church Paper.** — If the society has a press committee, the church paper should be left to it; but if there is no such committee, the good-literature committee might well carry on all the work of a church paper, if the pastor and the church

desires, of course under the direction of the pastor or of some other competent overseer. They could get the advertisements, attend to the mailing, obtain subscribers, and even in many cases they set the type and do the printing. If the *Endeavorers* do not take entire charge of such an enterprise, they may be made responsible for a certain part of the paper, say a page.

**As Subscription Agents.** — Often the only reason why the denominational missionary periodicals and the other periodicals of the denomination are not taken in large numbers in the church is because there is no one to look after the matter. Each year the good-literature committee should carry on a systematic and determined canvass for good periodicals. It should have on its list *The Christian Endeavor World*, the denominational missionary magazines, some leading denominational paper, and some representative temperance paper. Probably there will be no reason, either, why it should not also take subscriptions for the best of the secular journals, especially

the most able reviews ; but usually those will take care of themselves, and what the Endeavorers are most desirous of pushing is strictly religious reading. Divide the town into districts, and let each member of the committee work his own district thoroughly.

**A Sample Table.** — It will greatly help the committee in this work if they will establish in the society meeting-room a table devoted to the display of samples of all the periodicals for which they are taking subscriptions. If the publishers are offering premiums, show the premiums also. Placards above the table should give terms, and state also the names of the committee ; but some member of the committee should always be on hand during the time when the Endeavorers are near, to “talk up” the periodicals.

**Literary Socials.** — Much interest may be excited in good reading by enthusiastic literary socials. It is a good plan to devote each to the study of one author whose works are accessible. His portrait

should be upon the wall. Other pictures relating to him may be shown. A brisk account of his life should be given. Extracts from his works will be read, recited, and sung. Whatever can arouse interest in him as a man and an author will be brought forth. Some skilful speaker will give practical directions as to the way to read him — what books first, and how to get the most out of his writings.

This kind of social may be varied by having an evening given up to the German authors, for instance, or to the authors of your own State, or to women poets, or to the great essayists, and so on. Many attractive socials of the kind are fully described in "Social Evenings," "Social to Save," and "Eighty Pleasant Evenings," all sold by the United Society of Christian Endeavor (35 cents each). Among these are "newspaper socials," "magazine socials," and the like.

**Literary Debates.** — A very valuable exercise for a literary social, especially useful for the interest it excites in good reading, is the literary debate. It should

be conducted like ordinary debates, and the theme should be some literary question, such as "Was Hamlet insane?" "Did Shakespeare write the works commonly attributed to him?" "Which is the greatest American poet?" "Has America or England furnished the truest humor?" "Does romance or realism have the most helpful influence on life?" These are old questions, and the society may well be sufficiently advanced to take less hackneyed themes. If so, all the better.

A similar sort of amusement for socials is the following. Let each member present name his favorite periodical, and tell why it is his favorite; or his favorite story; or his favorite poem.

**A Campaign against Fiction.** — At some social give the Endeavorers pencils and pieces of paper, and ask them to write lists of all the books they have read during the year. You will get a good variety of lists, and the whole will give your committee a view of the intellectual tastes of the society such as it could hardly gain in any other way. Offer a prize for the best

list. In most societies, however, I fear, even the best list will contain very little but fiction, and such a test may be made the text and basis of a campaign against fiction. Endeavor in every way to show the Endeavorers that, though fiction is valuable and not to be omitted from one's reading, nevertheless those whose chief reading is stories are sure to be intellectual weaklings, nor are they likely to be stronger spiritually than intellectually.

**In Regard to the Public Library.**— If there is a public library in your town, the good-literature committee should open up a work in connection with it. Study the catalogue, and offer to guide the Endeavorers in their reading. Watch the new books as they are received, and speak of the best of them in the society meeting. Speak privately of all the good books you can learn about that are in the public library. Get in touch with the librarian. If you know of some book that would help the young people in any way, if it is not in the library, ask that it be purchased. Do the same for good periodicals. The public

library is your most useful tool in your work for the promotion of good literature. Use it wisely and energetically.

**A Town Library Founded.** — What nobler or more permanent work is possible for a good-literature committee than the organization of a town library, where none exists? Often the circulation of a petition will bring sufficient pressure to bear upon the town officers to win a regular appropriation for the library from town funds, especially if the citizens give the enterprise a good start by private donations. Let the Endeavorers themselves take turns as librarian, and if the library cannot be kept open all the time at first, let it be kept open as long and as often as possible, especially in the evenings. A well-stocked reading-room and a room where quiet games can be played will add immensely to the influence of the establishment.

**One Book a Month.** — At the time of writing, *The Christian Endeavor World* is pushing the plan of "One Good Book a Month," furnishing at remarkably low



rates a single fine classic each month, in the endeavor to promote good reading and wean the young folks from over-much fiction. Either in connection with that paper (if it continues its present plan), or by yourselves, this excellent method may be carried out. Make "One good book a month" your slogan, and see how many of the Endeavorers you can persuade to undertake this reading. The committee may prescribe a uniform course, leaving it for the Endeavorers to obtain the books; or they may be able to buy them cheaper for the society; or each Endeavorer may be allowed to make his own selection, a prize being offered for the list of twelve books read by the end of the year which, in the opinion of three competent judges, is the finest selection.

**Half an Hour a Day.** — Another slogan well worth raising is, "Half an hour a day for the best books." The committee may obtain promises for this endeavor. Let the members of the society keep their records of time, at the same time keeping a record of the number of pages read each day

and of the books read. At the end of the year a committee of good judges will take these lists and determine which is the best record, making estimate of the regularity, the number of pages, and especially the quality of the books. This plan is already in most successful operation in many homes. The prize of a good book for the best record will be a helpful stimulus.

**A Literary Bulletin.** — Place somewhere near the door of your meeting-room a large sheet of paper with a stiff backing. A pencil will hang by a string at its side, and the Endeavorers will be asked to write on the bulletin the names of the articles, poems, and books they have recently read which have helped them most, always telling where they may be found. Even if only a few do this, the custom will be a delightful and profitable one, and it is a custom quite sure to grow.

**Five Minutes for Good Literature.** — It would not be amiss, but, on the other hand, quite in harmony with the purposes of a Christian Endeavor prayer meeting,

if five minutes should be set apart at the beginning of every meeting, in which time some one Endeavorer should tell about the best book he has read during the past year. Every member should take turns in making this report, and the knowledge that such a report is to be given will do as much as the reports themselves to stimulate and direct the best reading.

**Reading Circles.** — In few ways can the good-literature committee do more useful work than by organizing reading circles. These are at their best when they are merely neighborhood affairs, three or four congenial young folks coming together, perhaps one evening a week, in some pleasant parlor to read and discuss some book that is really worth while. A society broken up into such neighborhood groups would be bound together by the most delightful of ties.

**Study Classes.** — In every locality probably some one can be found who is capable of carrying on classes in the study of the best literature, and in most societies the good-literature committee could, with a

little effort or with none at all, organize such classes and place competent teachers over them. A whole winter, if you are ambitious, might be spent upon Browning, or Shakespeare, upon the great essayists, upon German literature, upon Dante, upon the writers of the Puritan times, and the like. You can gain in this way a constantly broadening culture, and the effect in the enrichment of your prayer meeting would be immediate and marked.

**A Course of Lectures.**— The good-literature committee will do much to promote the cause of good reading if it can obtain the services of some skilful lecturer on literary themes. The lectures may treat the biographies of great authors, or may speak of the books themselves. Sell course tickets energetically, and you may make enough for the nucleus of a society library, as well as set the Endeavorers to reading the best books. If no single lecturer, who is capable of this work, is accessible, the committee may be able to construct a delightful course by obtaining lectures from home talent, one from a

school teacher, one from a minister, one from a doctor, and so on. A lecture course of the kind is possible in almost every community, if the committee only have faith and determination.

**Book and Magazine Clubs.** — In a magazine club each member buys one magazine and has the reading of all the magazines, letting the others read his. The club should be kept so small that each member can keep every magazine perhaps three days, and yet read all the magazines in the course of the month. On a three-day basis ten magazines and ten members would be about right, and many societies could support several such clubs.

In making up your list of periodicals, get as great a variety as you can: several magazines of general literature, one of science, one solid review, one of general missionary intelligence, one summary of the current news, one literary review, one magazine for women, one magazine of outdoor life, and so on. The secretary of the club will order all the magazines together, thus effecting a considerable saving, and

at the end of the month each subscriber will retain the magazine for which he especially subscribed. The same plan is followed with regard to books, the books being bought only after mutual consultation among the members.

**A Christian Endeavor Library.** — A small library especially devoted to Christian Endeavor helps will prove of the greatest advantage to the society. It will prove economical, too, in the long run, since the same committee helps may then be handed down from one year's workers to the next. The United Society of Christian Endeavor and the denominational publishing houses have now a full supply of books and pamphlets describing all kinds of Christian work for the young, and a complete set of these may be bought for a song. Every good-literature committee should send to the United Society of Christian Endeavor, Tremont Temple, Boston, and obtain their price list, asking also for the low rate at which books are sold for society libraries.

And not only Christian Endeavor helps should find place in these libraries, but

books on missions, on temperance, on denominational history, on Christian evidences — in fine, whatever will aid the prayer meetings.

A librarian should be appointed, and the books regularly charged and distributed. Use a system of fines and collect strictly, for the sake of adding to the library. Some societies meet the cost of the library by charging two cents a volume for the privilege of reading — a charge which soon redeems the cost of the book. Other societies increase their libraries by holding book socials, the admission fee being some good book. One society of which I have heard has determined to add to its library each year as many books as Christian Endeavor is years old! Many capital Christian Endeavor stories have been written, and if these are added to the library, they will form an additional source of popularity.

**Committee Helps.** — If a Christian Endeavor library seems inadvisable, at any rate the good-literature committee should obtain a full collection of Christian En-

deavor committee helps, and loan them from year to year to the different committees. In this way it will aid the society more than by anything else it could possibly do.

**The Sunday-School Library.**—If you have a Sunday-school committee, it may be left to work this field, but otherwise it falls to the province of your committee. First find out the best books in the library, and then make them known. Hold a library meeting, in the course of which a number of Endeavorers will speak, each telling about some bright book to be found in the school library. Have the books there to show. Give every one a piece of paper and a pencil to jot down the numbers. Have the librarian there to issue library cards to all that do not already hold them.

In addition, the committee may interest itself in adding good books to the school library. Especially, if you have no Christian Endeavor library, see that the Sunday-school library contains as many Christian Endeavor books as possible, and



also books on missions and temperance. Possibly you can get the Endeavorers to give each of them one book, or hold some entertainment to raise money for this purpose.

**A Private Good-Literature Committee.** — I have read of a group of young men who banded themselves together, quite independently of any action on the part of their Christian Endeavor society, for the purpose of obtaining good reading-matter first for themselves, and then to be given away. They assessed weekly dues of ten cents each, and thus were enabled to buy a quantity of helpful books, pamphlets, and tracts, which they distributed to the best advantage. Such a group might be formed in any society, limited in number only by the willingness of the Endeavorers and the size of their purses.

**The Use of Tracts.** — Every good-literature committee should learn, and, having learned, teach the other Endeavorers the value of tracts and how to use them. Choose your tracts with much care. The American Tract Society, 150 Nassau

Street, New York City, will furnish them in great variety and at small cost. So, doubtless, will your denominational publishing house. Tracts on special themes in which you become interested, such as tithing, kindness to animals, and the like, must be sought from special sources. No tract should be used that is not well printed, attractively put together, and written in an interesting style — simply, and in a manly, straightforward fashion.

In the same fashion the tracts should be presented. Just a word is enough: "I am interested in what this leaflet says, and I am trying to get folks to read it. Have one, won't you?" Such a request does not single out the recipient as the object of special attention, which he might resent, but loses him in a multitude of others to whom you appear to be giving the tract.

# Our Workers' Library.

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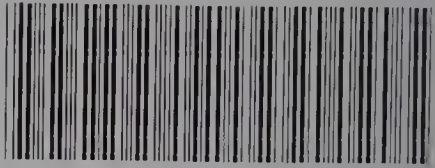
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