

LXXXIV.

AUGUST BELMONT.

THE house of Belmont & Co., in New York, has few superiors. As the agent of the Rothschilds, this house is preëminent. In a dingy granite building on Wall Street, with low, dark chambers, plainly, and, in comparison with other banking-houses, meanly furnished, Belmont & Co. transact their immense business. There is nothing attractive about the person of the banker. He is a Jew, whose countenance and speech indicate his nationality. He is thick-set, but stunted in size. He is very lame, and his appearance impresses no one. He is a leading politician, and makes large contributions for political purposes, and receives in exchange the chairmanship of important committees. His wife was the daughter of Commodore Perry, on whom he settled an independent fortune before marriage. He lives on Fifth Avenue, in a very large but plainly built brick mansion, modelled after the London houses. His picture gallery is second only to that owned by Mr. Lenox. Unlike Mr. Lenox, he does not close his house against his friends. He is very hospitable, entertains very largely during the season, and in princely style. He is very fond of masquerades and private theatricals. He often takes the leading characters, and imports the

most sumptuous dresses from abroad for himself and friends. No banker in New York can spread a table covered with such costly plate. A quiet man in business, very decided, and using but few words, he is very genial, with a great flow of spirits when he acts the part of host, or joins in the entertainments of his friends.

LXXXV.

EDWIN D. MORGAN.

A NATIVE of Massachusetts, Mr. Morgan came to New York when quite young. He was penniless, and began trade in as small way as can be imagined. He bartered for a while in the products of his native state, and then set up the grocery business in as small way as can well be conceived. With a plain, common school education, he had a good deal of business tact. His habits were good, and by strict attention to business he slowly but surely improved his fortune. He became a wholesale trader, and from his grocery establishment on Front Street he removed to Exchange Place, and opened the house of E. D. Morgan & Co. He became a bold operator in goods, stocks, and real estate. His clear brain enabled him to walk safely where other men stumbled. He made money where other men lost it. He is now about sixty years of age, with a fortune estimated at one million of dollars. For twenty years he has been in political life. He was governor of the state during the war, and is now United States senator. He has a very fine mansion on Fifth Avenue, where he dispenses a liberal and elegant hospitality.

LXXXVI.

THEATRES IN NEW YORK.

NOTHING has changed more than the New York theatres. The opera has taken the place of drama, and the so-called moral plays have superseded Shakespeare and his friends. The pit has departed, and in its place has arisen the parquette, the most reputable portion of the house. The third gallery has been removed, never to return, at least during this generation. There are no actors in New York of any note, and the pieces put on the stage, except at Wallack's, are a burlesque. The retirement of Mrs. Hoey from the stage left no actress of any name to gratify New York. Wallack's Theatre is unexceptional in elegance, scenery, the manner in which pieces are put on the stage, and in the dress of the artists.

The Bowery is all that remains of the theatre of the olden time. The Bowery Boys, Plug Uglies, and low New York patronize this place, and the plays are of the Dick Turpin and blood-and-thunder school. Moral lessons are suggested by the sight of the upper part of this institution, and the crowded condition and character of the audience, that can be found nowhere else. An occasional visit of an artist of note stirs New York to its centre. But the performers in our theatres scarcely

rise to the dignity of second-rate actors. Billiards, cards, costly parties, clubs, and dissipation take the place of play-going. We have numerous sensational play-houses, where small actors perform small plays, written by small men. But the era of sterling drama and talented actors is in the past, perhaps never to return.

LXXXVII.

THE NEW YORK YOUNG MEN'S
CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

ORIGIN. — CONTROVERSY ON SLAVERY. — WHO ORIGINATED FULTON STREET DAY MEETING? — ASSOCIATION AND THE WAR. — LARGE WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION. — THE NEW HEADQUARTERS. — PURPOSE OF THE ASSOCIATION. — OUTSIDE WORK.

ORIGIN.

This benevolent society was organized 16th of July, 1852, having for its object the improvement of the spiritual, mental, and social condition of young men. It first occupied a part of Stuyvesant Institute, No. 659 Broadway, and after various removals is now fixed in neat and pleasant rooms at the corner of Broadway and Twenty-second Street, from which there will probably be no removal until the Association is permanently established in its new building at the corner of Twenty-third Street and Fourth Avenue, which will probably be completed as early as May, 1869. The Association has wrought a good work among the young men of the city in the past, and has done much for their elevation and improvement. By many it has heretofore been looked upon as an experiment, and has encountered much opposition from some quarters. At one time

quite a number of the leading clergymen of the city took strong ground against it.

CONTROVERSY ON SLAVERY.

An important and prolonged controversy, in the winter of 1856-57, originating in a dispute about the action of a committee, and finally involving in some degree the opinion of the members on the question of slavery, then agitating the whole community, resulted in the withdrawal of one hundred and fifty persons, and for a time retarded the progress of the Association. A persistent adherence on the part of the remaining members to the special work for which the society was established, and a growing conviction in the minds of philanthropic and Christian men of the peculiar temptations and dangers to which young men are exposed in this city, resulted shortly in its restoration to the place in the confidence of our citizens which it had formerly held. Since that time the Association has been steadily advancing in public favor, until now there are few who question its usefulness and value as an agency in opposing the inroads of evil and wickedness.

WHO ORIGINATED FULTON STREET DAY MEETING?

More than one year before the Fulton Street prayer-meeting was held under its present management, a committee of this society held in that now doubly sacred consistory a noonday prayer-meeting. These meetings were suspended in July, 1856, and in the autumn of that year they were resumed under the present direction, and have ever since so continued.

ASSOCIATION AND THE WAR.

At the breaking out of the war this Association took the lead in the work subsequently prosecuted by the Christian Commission, and for a long time were almost alone. On the 27th of May, 1861, their army committee began its work. It was prosecuted in various forms about this city, in the camps, and among the soldiers temporarily here, until the battle of Bull Run, when it was extended to the camps and hospitals about Washington. It assumed such gigantic proportions that this Association urged a combination of all kindred societies for its prosecution, and finally, in response to the urgent requests of the army committee, a convention of these associations met in the rooms of the New York society on the 15th of November, 1861, when the Christian Commission was formed. In the prosecution of this work an army hymn-book was published by the committee, of which one hundred and fifty thousand copies were circulated among the soldiers. During the summer of 1862, while large numbers of wounded soldiers from the Peninsula were in the hospitals about the city, a committee of night-watchers, composed of members and friends of the Association, of more than three hundred, was organized, which rendered an invaluable service through the whole of that sad season. Each person held himself ready to spend the night at any hospital which should be indicated two days in advance by the chairman of the committee. The Association is entitled to great credit for this work, which is akin to that in which like societies have engaged in other cities where pestilence has prevailed.

LARGE WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION.

It is not among the least of the good works of this Association that it has aroused the attention of thinking people to the peculiar condition and needs of the young men of this city. The special efforts put forth in this direction more recently deserve mention. An elaborate pamphlet, in form a skeleton of an argument upon this subject, was issued some two years since, which was circulated extensively among newspaper editors, clergymen, and our leading citizens of other callings; this was followed by the publication of a series of letters received by officers of the Association supporting the position taken in the pamphlet. These attracted much attention, were made the subject of many leading newspaper articles, and were adverted to and commented upon largely in sermons and public addresses.

THE NEW HEADQUARTERS.

The Association reaped an immediate advantage in their effort to collect a sum sufficient to erect a building commensurate with the work in hand. Already some two hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars have been placed under the control of a board of trustees, specially created by an act of the legislature to hold the real estate of the Association. For the completion of the building as now contemplated, however, one hundred and fifty thousand dollars more will be required.

A fine plot of ground, of more than six full lots, has been purchased on the corner of Twenty-third Street and Fourth Avenue, where ground has already been

broken for the proposed building, which is to be one hundred and seventy-five feet on the street and eighty-three feet on the avenue, and five stories high. The material is red brick, with light stone trimmings; the style of architecture either Renaissance or Gothic, with Mansard roof. The first floor is appropriated to stores, and the fourth and fifth to studies. From these a rental is expected sufficient to carry on much of the work of the Association.

The second and third stories are set apart for the purposes of the Association. There is to be a fine reading-room; library with space for thirty thousand volumes; a lecture-room which will seat fifteen hundred persons; convenient class-rooms, parlors, a conversation-room, and a commodious gymnasium. Here it is proposed to carry on the work contemplated by the Association at its organization, upon a scale somewhat corresponding with the proportions of the field before it.

PURPOSE OF THE ASSOCIATION.

No pains will be spared to keep prominent, and to realize the great moral and religious objects of the society; nor is it designed to neglect any secondary means or objects consistent with the grand purpose, for it is held by the Association that genuine radical reforms, unquestioned elevation and improvement, are formed only in a real change of heart, and complete personal dedication to the service of Christ.

Already the foundation has been laid for a theological reference library, and the collection of books is even now extensive; but the expectation is to make it complete in all departments, so that no one need com-

plain of a lack of means to investigate any department of religious or theological truth or speculation, or any phase of religious belief, even the most peculiar. This collection will be free to all when completed, as it is now in its beginning.

It is aimed, in the new building with its commodious rooms, to make free lectures, and classes upon topics and studies most useful to young men, a leading feature; and plans are now under consideration touching these matters.

The gymnasium will be large, scientifically arranged, thoroughly furnished, and free to all members of the Association.

OUTSIDE WORK.

While laying plans for this central building, the board of directors have not forgotten the more remote sections of the city. They look to branches, as aids in reaching young men.

Already one is in full and successful operation in Varick Street, near Canal, conducted much upon the plan of the parent society; another in Wooster Street for the colored young men; one in Ludlow Street for the Germans. Another is now being organized in Harlem, and yet another in Grand Street, not far from the East River. It is not supposed that these will meet the wants of the young men of the city, but some three or four others are in contemplation.

Every effort is made by the officers of the Association to employ, and develop, and increase the working power of the members, now more than sixteen hundred in number. The various committees are made as large as possible, while retaining compactness and

efficiency, and the aim is to have each person render some real service. There is something for every one to do,— money to be raised; young men to be invited to the rooms; to be introduced to good boarding-houses, to suitable companions, and places of employment, and agreeable church connections; prayer-meetings to be sustained, the sick and destitute to be visited; and thus each young man, while made a missionary to others, is being trained among those of his own age for the best works of charity. And many of the leading men in middle life in our city, and in the land, began their philanthropic and Christian work in this Association. As greater experience is acquired, this scheme for training young men, while rendering them at present useful, will operate with greater efficiency. And the power of the Association for good will be more than correspondingly increased when the new building is ready for occupation. All through its history there have been many capable and talented young men in the board of directors, and active on the committees; and it is safe to say that at no former period has there been connected with it so large a number of men, well and favorably known to all our citizens, and so largely enjoying their confidence, as now. In this respect the Association will not suffer in comparison with any corporation in the city, secular or religious.