

## Messenger and Visitor

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### The Grounds for Prohibition.

A correspondent whose communication appears in another column, professes, and we presume quite sincerely, to be in search of a Scriptural precept on which to found a law prohibiting the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks. He doubts that there is to be found in the Bible any authority for such an interference with personal liberty as a prohibitory law would involve. It seems well, therefore, to say in the first place that, so far as we are aware, no one proposes to interfere with personal liberty in this matter to the extent of enacting a law which should be absolutely prohibitory of the making and use of alcoholic beverages. Liquors would still be manufactured for use in the arts and for medicinal purposes. Besides, we do not understand that, under prohibition, the officers of the law would have any authority to invade the homes of the people and prevent them exercising their ordinary liberty in regard to their own property. If people chose to gather the fruits of their gardens or their orchards and make from them wine or cider for the use of their own families or to set before their guests, we suppose that a "prohibitory law" would not interfere with them in doing that. What the law would aim at doing would be to abolish the manufacture and traffic in drink so far as it goes to supply the demand and promote the sale of liquors, through bar-rooms and otherwise, in hotels, restaurants, clubs, saloons and dramshops of all descriptions, whereby drinking habits in the highest degree detrimental to the public welfare are being created and fostered.

Now, as it seems to us, it is wholly a mistake to regard the Bible as being a repository of precepts designed to meet every condition and exigency of legislation and government, and our correspondent should not be too ready to conclude that any proposed legislation is wrong if he is unable to find a Scriptural precept which directly enjoins or authorizes it. Many prohibitionists certainly claim at least an indirect divine sanction for what they propose. According to the Bible, man is endowed with large authority over the world and the things which it contains. Human society has the Divine approval. Human government is thus indirectly an ordinance of God and those who are appointed to rule are God's ministers. (Romans xiii). Legislators are under obligation to act according to the best light of their day in view of the needs and circumstances of the age and country in which their functions are exercised. They ought to seek the illumination of God's Word and the Divine Spirit, that they may act in accordance with truth and righteousness. It is good Bible doctrine, we take it, that in the performance of any duty which devolves upon a man as a citizen, an elector or a legislator, he should act in accordance with the best light he can obtain from all sources. But the Bible does not undertake to give particular precepts for legislation and government under all conditions and circumstances, and one who expects to find in the Scriptures a direct "thus saith the Lord" for every exigency which may arise in respect to legislation will certainly be disappointed. If the anti-slavery cause must have waited for victory until such a word could have been found, the negro race would have been in bondage until now. Forty years ago plenty of excellent Christian men upon this continent were defending negro slavery on Scriptural grounds. To day he would be a bold man who should undertake to say that the spirit of the New Testament is not utterly opposed to human slavery. And can any Christian man, who has any conception of what the liquor business of this continent is, doubt that it is also just as truly opposed to the spirit of that book?

The supporters of prohibition call for it on ground similar to that on which other reformatory or beneficial legislation is advocated and enacted. That principle is not, as our correspondent appears to think, the right of government to prohibit the use of anything which by misuse may work evil to society. It is rather the right to restrict in a measure the privileges of individuals for the sake of the general good, and accordingly to forbid to individuals or to associations of men a course of action which results have proved to be greatly inimical to the general interests of society. It is scarcely necessary to point out that a great deal of legislation now on our statute books is of this character. There are, for example, the laws for the protection of the lobster and other fisheries, with the game laws generally. There are ordinances forbidding the erection of certain kinds of buildings and the keeping of certain animals in cities or certain portions of them. A man may say, "I have a right to build a wooden house or to keep a pig, and you can find no precept in Scripture to forbid me doing so." But the law, voicing the general desire and interest of the community, steps in and says, "Under certain circumstances it is not permitted you to do these things." And so it might be said of the game laws and fishing laws mentioned above and of many others; for legislation is constantly proceeding on the ground that it is right that the privileges of individuals shall give way to the general good of the community. This, as we understand the matter, is the ground on which a very large proportion of the people of this country are agreed in desiring that a law prohibiting the public manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors shall be enacted. The principle, as it seems to us, is sound enough, and the questions to be chiefly considered in connection with it are practical ones,—as to whether, for instance, a prohibitory law, if enacted, would be so enforced by the government and so supported by the people as to accomplish the ends desired and thereby abolish or greatly lessen the evils now resulting from the traffic in strong drink.

There are other very strong moral considerations to be urged in favor of a prohibitory law, upon which we have not here touched, and the consideration of which must be reserved for another occasion.

### Editorial Notes.

—It will be seen by a communication which appears elsewhere in this paper that the Ministers Annuitly Board, through its secretary-treasurer, makes an earnest appeal for the funds necessary to pay to disabled ministers, or to the families of those who have fallen in the service, the annuities due to them. This is a matter which must appeal strongly on its own merits both to the sympathy and the sense of justice of the denomination. If the annuities are not paid it will be a very serious matter to those who are depending upon them to eke out a slender income. Let us hope there may be such a response to the appeal now made as will gladden the hearts both of the Board and the annuitants.

—One of our most successful pastors, in whose field the circulation of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR has been increased of late by the addition of quite a large number of names, said to us the other day: "I find that it is much more satisfactory preaching to the people who read the paper, than to those who do not. The former are not only acquainted with and interested in our denominational work, but as they read week by week the discussion of passing events on the first page of the paper, they become intelligent as to many matters of current history, and when in my preaching I make a reference to the events of the day, they understand what I mean, while those who do not read the paper fall to 'catch on.'"

—McMaster University, at its recent convocation, performed a graceful act in conferring upon President Trotter elect of Acadia, the honorary degree of D. D. The only other honorary degree conferred was that of LL. D., which was bestowed upon Mr. J. R. Wells, who for some seventeen years, as a

teacher in Woodstock College, rendered valuable service to the cause of Baptist education in Ontario. Mr. Wells has also been for several years past the highly esteemed editor of the Canadian Baptist, and his work in other departments of journalism, as well as in connection with the denominational press, has won for him recognition as an able journalist. Mr. Wells is a native of New Brunswick, and a graduate of Acadia.

—Alluding to the fact that the Parliament of Canada has just voted the sum of \$5,000 for a monument to the late Hon. Alexander MacKensie, the Presbyterian Witness says: "In supporting the motion to make the grant Sir Charles Tupper paid a warm tribute to the memory of Mr. Mackenzie—a tribute which was well deserved,—every word of it just and true. In the parliament Mr. Mackenzie and Sir Charles were keen antagonists, and they were unsparing in their attacks. But death and time bring changes that are not more surprising than they are becoming. Mr. Gladstone pronounced Disraeli's eulogy in the British House of Commons. Mr. Laurier pronounced an eulogy of classic elegance upon the late Sir John Macdonald. Men who did not love Joseph Howe living, have lauded his memory. Would it not be comely to cultivate all courtesy towards the living as well as the dead who little heed our praise or blame."

—The new Chinese Minister at Washington—Wing Lu Fan—is said to be a Christian—a member of the Church of England. He was educated in London, and called to the English bar in 1877. Viceroy Li Hung Chang became impressed with his ability and selected him as his legal adviser. He was employed in connection with the negotiations for peace with Japan. While in San Francisco on his way to Washington, Minister Wing Lu Fan attended a reception, given by the Christian Chinese of the city, and gave a fine address in English and one in Chinese also. He reminded his countrymen of the fact that they owed much to the missionaries for their interest in them at a time when China had no diplomatic representation in the United States. His suite, it is said, nearly all speak English, and one of them belongs to a well-known Christian family in Hong Kong.

—The annual meetings of the great American Baptist societies recently held at Pittsburg, Pa., appear to have been quite up to the average of such occasions in general interest. A somewhat smaller representation than usual was present from the New England churches, which is accounted for on the ground that many churches have given so largely toward the extinguishing of the debts of the missionary societies, that they did not feel able to send their pastors to the May meetings as usual, while ministers, who are accustomed to pay their own expenses, in many instances had personally contributed so largely to the same object as to make it necessary for them to forego the privilege of going to Pittsburg. It will be remembered that it was undertaken to raise \$236,000 to supplement Mr. Rockefeller's contribution of \$250,000, for the purpose of placing the Foreign and Home Mission Societies clear of debt. It was reported by Dr. Mable, during the progress of the meetings, that nearly \$200,000 of the sum desired had been pledged, and this is believed to place the undertaking beyond the possibility of failure. The contribution toward the debt is in addition to about \$600,000 contributed for mission work the present year in connection with the societies.

—"Denunciation of Christian churches is not an essential feature of an evangelistic campaign," remarks the New York Observer. "Yet with some evangelists it is a portion of their stock in trade, while the most noted evangelists are sometimes guilty of this weakness. It is true that the holy lips of the Master denounce the Scribes and Pharisees of His day, and it is possible that were he now among men in bodily presence He would utter his denunciations from some of our pulpits to some of our pews. But the denunciations of which we complain fall from the lips of frail men, who cannot judge with Christ's unerring intuition, or speak with His undoubted authority. The foremost evangelist of the day has grieved many a devoted Christian by his sweeping and bitter words about the churches and the ministers, and complaints have been made to him, and we believe, graciously received. Many other evangelists soon learn wisdom. An evangelist who comes to this

country at the call and whose expenses members of Christian churches are to bear, reflection is ill timed charge as true as it is the cheap wit of some disregard the chaff if but not the needless members who pay for ever done. No soul professor was ever Christian life, by dia

An urgent appeal by Fund to the church the Convention, tion for the Annu

Dear brethren and churches in the Marit Soon after the close made a careful estim current year. It was would meet the dema were therefore sent amount. In addition a number of brethren willing to contribute to four benevolent friends responded to these \$262 of the \$1,200 asks thanks these kind friends liberal donations.

At a meeting of the ascertained that, unless before the first of July, the half year instalment therefore resolved to MISSISSIPPI AND VIRGIN overdrawn \$377. It was January last to make a the claimants their half same time it was resolved to this decision. This, the Convention.

Now the only course ance with the instructio to the 266 churches which year; and to any brethren help at this time of need into serious consideration ally. Give the Board year the Presbyterian \$2,000 for this object. \$1,000.

Halifax, Board—D. McN. Park Mont. McDonald, C. H. Dumaresq, William Davison, R. Shand, R. N. B. M. W. Brown.

### "A Watch on t

BY ALEXANDER

No doubt Eastern people Westerners are; but modern of cities and its wealth has heightened the power and made James' exhortations here gathers round the fire, the untamed creature deal with these in order. 1. No doubt, in the organization, there were eyes, such as Paul hints where many voices of warning. James would cheer hearing. James would cheer by the thought that what they preach will rec those who did not set up classes himself with the introduces a reason for the hard to avoid falls, and ha action, it is a dangerous an That thought leads on to to the government of tong