

Messenger and Visitor

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Giving the Tenth.

It sometimes happens that earnest people defeat in part their own good intentions by claiming for some reform which they advocate a sanction which does not legitimately belong to it. This, as it appears to us, is what our esteemed correspondent, Mr. Dimock Archibald, does in his article which appears on another page, entitled, "The Curse upon Covetousness." That covetousness on the part of any individual Christian or Christian community involves a curse—or at least a withholding of divine blessing, is surely undeniable. Its presence in the Christian life is a baleful thing, blighting and dwarfing the spiritual faculties, arresting the work of grace in the soul and sadly hindering all Christian activities. Doubtless our correspondent is right in believing that the Christian world today—and our own denomination not less than others—is suffering great loss of spiritual life and power from this cause, and it were well if his earnest warning against this insinuating and paralyzing sin were heard and heeded.

In the injunctions of the Old Testament respecting tithes, we have an argument which may be legitimately used to commend the duty of Christian beneficence. Under the Jewish system tithes were to be given for the support of the ministers of religion, for the promotion of brotherly fellowship and as an expression of benevolence toward the widow, the fatherless and the stranger. And certainly, with his broader horizon in the realm of grace, the Christian should be able to recognize profounder reasons for gratitude and more powerful appeals to the spirit of benevolence than was possible to the Jew. From Old Testament example and precept, therefore, as well as from the spirit and letter of the New Testament, the principle and the practice of Christian liberality find the strongest support. It is a good thing, we believe, that Christians generally should aim to contribute at least one tenth of their income to religious and benevolent objects. It is well that in all legitimate and brotherly ways they should be encouraged and instructed to do so. For thousands of Christians in our own denomination, living now far beneath their obligations and their privileges in this matter, the giving of a tenth would mean for themselves a great enlargement of spiritual life and a corresponding forward movement in the work of the Kingdom. We are far from finding fault therefore with anyone who by practice and precept would encourage his brethren to contribute a tenth of their income to religious and benevolent work.

But when one makes the giving of a tenth a matter of necessity rather than of freewill, when it is presented as a law enjoined, under the sanction of a divine curse, upon all Christians and under all circumstances, then we must think that he is failing to recognize an essential distinction between the law and the gospel and is in some danger of forgetting what manner of spirit he is of. We do not know to what source our correspondent is indebted for the statement that tithing was universal during the first three Christian centuries, but while by precept, and still more by the whole spirit of its teaching, the New Testament prompts and encourages the largest exercise of liberality, the apostles never enjoin the giving of tithes as a duty specially binding upon Christians. And that this should be so is entirely in harmony with the spirit of the gospel. For Christian service is not a matter of law but of life and liberty inspired by the spirit of Christ and expressive of the love and gratitude begotten of Christ in the soul. If a Christian feels it to be his duty to give a tenth, or a fifth, or a half, or any portion less or more, of his income, the New

Testament bids him do it cheerfully as unto the Lord, but it never tells him that he *must*, under any and all circumstances, give a tenth. In the course of his epistles the Apostle Paul gives many precepts general or particular to guide and encourage his brethren in their Christian life, but never tells them that the giving of tithes is binding upon them, though he does exhort to liberality and lays down the rule that, when a contribution is being made, each should give according as the Lord has prospered him.

However justly we may dread and deprecate the results of the sin of covetousness, and however greatly we may deplore the lack of a more generous and general spirit of liberality in our churches, we may be sure that against this, as against all evils, we shall contend most successfully upon New Testament grounds and in the spirit of the gospel. "God's remedy for covetousness is the paying to him his tenths," says our brother in the article alluded to above. But surely, looking at it in the light of the New Testament, God's remedy for covetousness, as for every other sin, is the gospel of his grace revealed in Him who was crucified for us. If the recognition of the redeeming love does not unseal the fountains of liberality in the soul, will they be opened at the command of a law and the threat of a curse? "No one is likely," we are told, "to pay to God his tenth without a complete surrender to Christ of body, soul, life and business." But the case of that most scrupulous tithing-prayer, the ancient Pharisee—to say nothing of more modern instances—indicates that exceptions to such a rule are far from impossible. As we understand the New Testament, that man is most truly and intelligently Christian who regards himself and all he has as belonging to Christ, and who faithfully seeks to make the most of himself and of all over which he has been made steward, in the service of his Lord. Whether or not, in each particular case, that involves the contribution of one-tenth of his income year by year to religious and benevolent work, it is not for us or for any one to say. If it is the duty of many to give a tenth, it is doubtless equally the duty of some to give a fifth or a half; and if some Christian feels that he has performed his duty in this respect when from a meagre income he has contributed one-twentieth, who has authority to judge the Lord's servant? One man, with a small family to care for, is in possession of an income which enables him, with little or no sacrifice, to contribute a tenth to religious or benevolent work; another man, with no larger income and with a large family of children to support and educate, finds that it means real sacrifice to contribute a twentieth of his earnings. Is the latter, giving a twentieth, less acceptable to God or less serviceable in the church than the former, giving a tenth? In our view of the matter the Christian who, while using the means entrusted to him to feed, clothe and faithfully educate the children God has given him, is as truly applying it to the service of his Lord as if he gave it to feed and educate the children of others or put it into the mission treasury.

The Scott Act in Westmorland.

The anti-temperance party in Westmorland County has succeeded in its purpose to have an election held on the Scott Act with the hope of securing its repeal, and the vote is to take place on the 28th inst. There can be no doubt, we suppose, that the influence of the Scott Act in Westmorland has been to discourage the liquor traffic and to promote the temperance cause in the county. The fact that the liquor men are so anxious to have it repealed is sufficiently significant. We hope that their present intention may be defeated and that Westmorland will sustain its good reputation as a county in which, so far as practicable under present conditions, prohibition of the evil traffic is enforced. But if the fight is to result in the Act being sustained, the temperance people of Westmorland will need to put forth their best efforts. It is true that in the plebiscite the county gave a majority of 7,813 in favor of prohibition, but it would be most unwise to conclude that that fact necessarily insures victory for the temperance cause in the approaching contest. It is well to remember in this connection what has occurred in Brome County, Quebec, where, in spite of a majority of 500 having

been given for prohibition in the plebiscite vote, the Scott Act was repealed a year later by a still larger majority. It will be a matter of concern to the liquor party all over Canada to secure the repeal of the Scott Act in Westmorland, and it may be expected that all the arguments and influences which the enemies of temperance can command will be brought to bear on this contest. If, therefore, the temperance people of Westmorland believe, as we suppose they do, that it is for the interest of the cause to prevent the repeal of the Act, then we trust that they will make the most of the time that remains before the 28th in order that that day may mark a victory and not a defeat for the cause of temperance in Westmorland.

Editorial Notes

—The Government of Canada has offered to the Imperial authorities to furnish another regiment for South Africa if needed. At present writing the Imperial Government has not intimated whether or not the offer is to be accepted, but despatches say that the knowledge that the offer has been made causes great satisfaction in London as a demonstration of Canada's enthusiastic loyalty and profound interest in the Empire.

—The Provincial Convention of the W. C. T. U. is at present in session in St. John. Mrs. D. McLeod is the presiding officer. The annual report of the Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Atkinson, showed that the local societies had done much good work in the cause of temperance during the past year. The membership generally is on the increase and there is also an increase in enthusiasm and enterprise. Eleven Unions had been organized during the year, making a total of 46 in the province, with a membership of about 850. Among white-ribboned visitors at the Convention are Mrs. Rutherford and Mrs. Wiggins of Toronto, and Madame Barakat of Syria. The public addresses of the latter are an interesting feature of the Convention. Madame Barakat addressed a good audience at Mechanics Institute on Sunday afternoon. She has a good working command of the English language, and, though with a somewhat faulty accent, her speech is fluent and forcible, and her spirit earnest. Her address or sermon on Sunday was on Abraham, and her knowledge of Oriental character and customs enable her to throw some valuable side lights upon her subject. Madame Barakat is to deliver one or two other addresses during the progress of the Convention.

—The Secretary of State for the Colonies in his recent very able speech in the House of Commons, justifying the attitude of the British Government in the contention with the South African Republic, which has issued in the present war, makes mention of the great injustice practised by the Boers upon the native people as one of the things justifying the intervention of Great Britain. By the terms of the Convention with the Transvaal, Great Britain assumed the duty of protecting the natives from oppression. The British Government had not been wholly forgetful of this obligation, though Mr. Chamberlain appears to confess that it has not been made so prominent in the diplomatic correspondence as its importance justified, and no doubt it is the interests of the white man, rather than those of the black, which have been uppermost on both sides. There can be no doubt, however, that the treatment which the Boers have accorded to the natives of South Africa has been, from first to last, inhumanly unjust and cruel, and richly meriting punishment. It ought not in justice to be forgotten that the different attitude of the Boers and the British toward the native tribes has been and is still one highly influential reason of the friction and the conflict between them in South Africa. The Boers would have reduced the natives to most abject slavery. Only the strong arm of Britain has prevented it in the past, and the same is true today. An educated Basuto, Marshal Mazeke, a native of South Africa, contributes to the N. Y. Independent an article in which he shows the contempt and degradation—approaching absolute slavery—in which his people are held by the Boers of the Transvaal. "The Boers," Mr. Mazeke declares, "are a people who seem to know nothing of right and justice. . . . A dog in the Transvaal is treated better than a native. . . . The natives are not allowed to learn to read, and fines are exacted from any one who is found teaching them. The more educated the native be-