

endeavoured to impress upon your minds. 1st. To make manifest His great power and glory. 2nd. To impress us with an abiding sense of His great nearness. 3rd. "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." We miss the loved and absent ones, Mary and Jessie, from our circle here, but how much more are they missed from the lovely homes in which they lived. How little did any of us think last Sabbath, when they were here with us, that the call should come so soon to these two dear girls. To any one of us it may come before next Tuesday. At the best, we will only miss them a few short years, then for us the mourners will go about the streets, but if they miss one of us up yonder—oh! think of it—it will be "*forever and forever*." Mary and Jessie were lovely in their lives, and in death they are not divided.

"A few short years of evil past,
We reach the happy shore,
Where death-divided friends at last,
Shall meet to part no more."

The golden text of our lesson to-day is a very impressive one: "So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." To everyone He has committed a sacred trust, the salvation of our immortal souls. May we occupy till He come, and when called to give in our final account, may it be with joy and not with grief; each one teacher and scholar enabled to say: "Here am I, Lord, and they also whom Thou hast given me;" and the answer will be sure to come, "Well done good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

LEGAL SUPPRESSION OF THE LIQUOR TRAFFIC AND THE CHURCH COURTS.

MR. EDITOR,—Whatever differences of opinion there may be among those who are labouring for the good of their fellow-men, as to the best methods of accomplishing the ends they have in view, all good men must rejoice that human well-being and the good of the country generally, as affected by the drinking customs and the liquor traffic, is receiving at the present moment such a large measure of attention from so many earnest, influential, Christian, and patriotic men. In common with many private members and ministers in our Church, I was painfully affected and somewhat disappointed by the action taken by the Presbytery of Toronto, and some of the remarks made at a recent meeting of that Presbytery, and at the meeting of the Synod of Toronto and Kingston, by brethren justly held in high esteem, and who wield a powerful influence throughout our Church and the whole country. Their sentiments cannot but have great weight with all who know these brethren—and who in the Presbyterian Church in Canada, at the very least, does not know them?—and it is both because I cannot agree with their sentiments, and because I think the widespread publication of them through your columns is calculated to retard the progress and final triumph of a great philanthropic Christian undertaking, that I venture to call still further attention to them. I had departed from any intention of doing so until I read the communication of the Rev. Mr. Laing in your issue of the 20th ult., which is so much in line with the views and acts referred to.

I do not misunderstand the sentiments of these brethren, I think, and nothing can be farther from my intention than in the smallest measure to misconstrue them. They are as anxious as any in the community for the entire removal of the evils of intemperance, and they are as conscientious and upright in carrying out their convictions as the most conscientious of those who differ from them as to how this is to be effected. The whole question at issue is, as to the propriety or expediency of making use of one special means, in addition to many others, of combating the evils of intemperance and the traffic in strong drink—the latter mainly as implied in the former. This question is, further, as to the propriety or expediency of Christian ministers, in their conduct as ministers generally, through Church courts more particularly, and of Church courts in their corporate capacity, making any use of legislation, or taking cognizance in any way of the action of our legislatures as regards this subject of temperance. I beg respectfully to submit the following consideration to your readers by way of friendly criticism of the words and actions of esteemed brethren from whom I differ, and with a view to counteract in some minds possibly, the unfavourable effect

which I fear may result from the position which they have taken:

I. It would appear to be a wrong position to take, or if the word wrong be too strong, at least an unwise position to take—one that might lead a Christian minister and Church courts often to compromise themselves by taking questionable ground or action not sufficiently pronounced in relation to a great public evil or good either—to say that a Christian minister or Church court, as such, should *never* appeal to legislation for aid or call legislation in question. It may be said that "we do not take that position." But if ever any question, apart from one directly assailing the character and privileges of Churches and ministers as such, would warrant the interference of ministers and Church courts in their official character, surely this present question is such a one. If this case, having so many and such vitally important bearings upon national life, upon public morals, upon the character, purity, and ability of the Church to attain some of the most important objects for which it exists—if this case will not warrant appeal to the legislature by ministers and Church courts, as such, then it would appear that no case almost at all could ever warrant it, and that therefore we are not wrong in ascribing it to them as their position, that in no case is it wise or expedient to appeal to the legislature for aid in a matter most deeply affecting public morals.

II. Perhaps it may only be putting the same argument in a somewhat different shape, but we put it in this shape also, as its force may thus be more obvious to some minds. I quite agree that ministers and Church courts, as such, should not, except for good reasons, appeal to or call in question the action of the legislature, however free they may feel to do so as citizens; but if it is at all a correct principle, and it is one which the common judgment of mankind sanctions and acts upon every day, "that special cases require special treatment, desperate diseases demand desperate remedies;" then this is such a case as does not only warrant but loudly call for special action. If, however, a minister says, in answer to such a call, and a Church court does the same: "We cannot do anything in our official character; we do not consider that we are called upon to do anything in that character, but we feel bound to do all we can, and we shall do all we can in every other character and in every other way." Does this not amount to a very plain, practical inconsistency, which the world will be very quick to understand, while it will be blind to the purely logical aspect of the case, and will it not be equivalent to a denial of the practical axiom that "special cases warrant special treatment?" We hope, therefore, that the friends of temperance, to the extent of the entire prohibition of the liquor traffic, will not be deterred from urging their case upon Church courts, and bringing their powerful influence to bear upon and help forward the triumph of, perhaps, the very greatest moral reform of our time.

Let it be noticed also in this connection that the opinions of these respected brethren, and others who think with them, are not shared by many whose judgment even they will cheerfully admit is entitled to the utmost respect. Is it not a thing which everyone knows that the Churches of the mother country, as a rule, at the present time have committees appointed to watch the course of legislation on certain matters of great public interest, and again and again have appealed to Parliament by petition, and the ministry for the time being by deputation, to enact such and such legislation, or to protest against unfavourable legislative action? Did not the Synod of Hamilton and London at its late meeting take in its official character very unmistakable action on the subject of education? And if we mistake not, the Presbytery of Toronto itself appointed a committee some time ago—perhaps it is still in existence—to watch legislation, and of course with a view to making its great influence felt upon it in the matter of legalizing marriage with a deceased wife's sister? Why then this sudden and very great susceptibility as to the propriety of a Presbytery or Synod taking any action in its official character upon a matter which the world at large certainly considers of unspeakably greater importance.

III. In harmony also with what has just been said, in the case of what is admitted to be a prevailing, pestilential, and utterly distinctive vice like intemperance, and baneful traffic like that in liquor, there does not appear to me, and I cannot think that there will

to most—at least I hope not—any sufficient ground to warrant making a distinction between what one's action should be, and what is right and called for, as a simple private citizen, and what it should be, and what is called for in one's capacity as a minister of the Gospel. I must say, sir, with the utmost deference to those who think differently, that, when the question concerns the suppression of vice and crime and misery of every kind, bound up inseparably with intemperance, it calls for the whole of every man's influence in every way not morally wrong to combat these evils, and if possible root them out altogether. This distinction set up in questions of this sort appears to be groundless and fraught with perilous consequences if generally adopted, both to the individuals who make it and to movements affecting the public good. I hope that those who may have been led to falter in their action in this matter on account of the weight they attach to the views of those who have taken their stand upon this distinction, will weigh the matter well before they take the responsibility of withholding their influence in *every* capacity from securing a great good to a vast number of their fellowmen.

I had intended saying a few words upon a point referred to by Mr. Laing, but I am already too lengthy and must leave that for the present. I trust, sir, that in all that I have said there is nothing that can wound, as I am sure there is nothing that is meant to do so. As friendly and full and frank discussion of this subject is desirable, that the right way to attain what so many are striving after at present may be clearly pointed out and correctly entered upon, and since as yet we have had nothing but the meagre reports of the press of the opinions of the brethren whose views and course have been called in question, might I suggest that it is due to themselves and could only result in good, if any one of them would give somewhat in detail his reasons for a course which so many who love and respect them, and who would greatly like to have all their influence with them, do not think is the one which the gravity of the case imperatively calls for, and which in the present circumstances of the Church and of the country is the wisest and best.

W. D. BALLANTYNE.

Amherst, May 27th, 1881.

RESIGNATION.

"Resignation is the courage of Christian sorrow," says Vinet. Excellent definition. It is not the effeminacy of luxurious grief, which makes an idol of trouble; it is the brave, heroic endurance which says of the ravages of sin, "An enemy hath done this;" and of the cruel affliction of sickness and death, "The work bears the finger-marks of the adversary; nevertheless I will bear these ills in such a manner as to snatch a victory from the foe, and turn his evil purpose to my good." In a word, let us sorrow without losing either our self-respect or our reverence. Let us grieve deeply at the moral disorder with which the world is filled, without trying to reason ourselves into the conviction that it is order under a different guise. Let us submit to sickness without trying to believe that it is only the reverse side of spiritual health; let us bow to bereavement without feeling called upon to deny that there is such a thing as "the sting of death," and that there is a dreadful enemy, from which Jesus came to deliver us; but an enemy still—even "*him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil*." *The Watchword.*

It is said of Thomas Arnold that as he neared death he had a returning love for the great central truths of Christianity. He had, for a time, been much given to speculation, and had experienced many harassing doubts, but as he drew near the realities of the eternal world, he lost all interest in the abstruse questions that had troubled him, and fell back in repeated conviction on the old familiar truths. Others who appeared for a time in the boastful "school of advanced thought," have had like experience. As death drew near they turned away from distracting speculations and renewed their grasp, firmer than ever, on the simple, vital truths of religion. There is a lesson here for all. It shows that the old, familiar, fundamental, long and well established truths are not to be superseded by mere human theories of religion. It has a special lesson for ministers, that they best seek their personal comfort and usefulness, by keeping themselves and their preaching close to the precious truths of the old Gospel of salvation.