

LIVING ISSUES FOR PULPIT TREATMENT.

How Far is the Saloon Responsible for Our Criminals?

Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.—Ezek. vii: 2.

At the twenty-eighth convention of the United States Brewers' Association, held at St. Paul, May 30 and 31, Mr. G. Thomann, head of the brewers' "Literary Bureau," read a paper which purported to be a record of crimes in this country, as reported in the daily press, with a study of the causes which led to their commission. As might be expected, Brewer Thomann discovered that intemperance cuts a very small figure in the history of crime. Of 859 murders, the causes of which Brewer Thomann says he traced in the daily press reports, he finds only 98 due to liquor. And so of many other offenses.

Brewer Thomann's "investigation" and his conclusions therefrom have been taken up and reiterated by a number of our semi-religious and would-be philosophical journals in a manner that would seem to one unacquainted with the facts to utterly annihilate the theory of the saloon as a cause of crime.

In order to learn the opinions of those who *have most to do* with our criminal classes, with reference to this important subject, the relations of crime to the liquor traffic, we sent out to prison officials all over the United States the following questions, replies to which have been received from officials in forty-five different State prisons, penitentiaries and reformatory institutions:

QUESTIONS.

1. How far can you indorse the sentiments of ex-Chief-Justice Noah Davis, of New York, when he says, "Of all the causes of crime intemperance stands out the unapproachable chief?"

2. About what proportion of the prisoners confined in your institution have been drinking men?

3. In your opinion, what per cent. were brought there, either directly or indirectly, through the influence of the liquor traffic?

4. Is it not true that a very large majority of the crimes of violence may be traced to the influence of the saloon?

5. What would be the probable effect upon our penal institutions should every dram-shop in the land be forever abolished?

Of forty-three answers received to question No. 1, thirty-four *fully* indorsed the statement of Judge Davis; four more are in substantial agreement with him; three regard the use of intoxicants as the *occasion* rather than the cause of crime; while of the remaining two, one answers, "Of crimes against the person, yes." The other, "Intemperance is the cause of more evils than any other cause."

Of answers to question No. 2, one says "all"; one, "very nearly all"; one, "ten-elevenths," four report as high as nine-tenths; one, seven-eighths; one, 85 per cent.; three, four-fifths; five, three-fourths or more; two, two-thirds; one, "nearer 70 than 65 per cent.," one, 65 per cent.; one, "very large"; one, "one-half or more"; one, 48 per cent.; one, 251 persons out of a total of 375; another, 762 out of a total of 1,360; another, 1,892 arrests for drunkenness alone, out of a total of 5,155; one can give no statistics, and another says that 20 per cent. of the boys in the industrial school have been drinkers.

The answers to question No. 3 indicate that the number of prisoners that have been brought to these institutions through the influence of the saloons is as large, and in many instances larger, than the actual number of drinking men among them. The answer of the chaplain of the Kentucky Penitentiary is, "ninety-nine one-hundredths," while the answers from the Arizona Penitentiary, the California State Prison, the Nebraska Penitentiary and the New York Industrial School are each 90 per cent.