

## Messenger and Visitor

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### Church-Member and Citizen.

Our correspondent, Mr. Stronach, from whom we publish in this issue a second communication on the subject of Prohibition and the relation of Christians thereto, appears to have fallen into unnecessary confusion in the discussion of the subject by failing to recognize what seems to us the very obvious fact that, in a country like this where popular government obtains, the Christian man is as truly a member of the body politic as of the Church of Christ and that the sphere of his relations and duties embraces the State as well as the Church. In a previous communication our correspondent offered some remarks and enquiries as to the teaching of the Scriptures concerning the duty of Christians toward the enactment of a prohibitory liquor law, expressing the opinion that the Scriptures did not justify Christians in seeking to obtain from the civil government the enactment of such a law. Replying to those remarks, we showed that there was no reason why the temperance reform should not be classed with others of a similar character which the State might properly promote for its own welfare, that explicit scriptural instructions were not to be expected in reference to such matters and that there was certainly no scriptural reason why Christians should not work for the legal prohibition of the liquor traffic, providing they believed that to be the most effective way of dealing with the evil.

But the question which Mr. Stronach desires to discuss, if we now understand him, has reference to the action of *Christian churches* in respect to prohibition. He holds that it is unscriptural and wrong for the churches either to "seek aid from the state," or to "aim to force the state into a certain line of conduct through political action." This is a fair subject for consideration and a discussion of it might not be without profit, but it is not necessarily involved in the matter as at first presented by our correspondent. In our issue of June 2, as may be seen by anyone who will refer to it, we discussed the subject not at all on ecclesiastical lines, but in connection with the conduct of Christian men as citizens. Our correspondent, therefore, fires quite wide of the mark in attempting a *reductio ad absurdum* by applying our remarks to a supposed action of a convention of churches in reference to the lobster fisheries. There is no reason why a Christian man or a body of Christian citizens should not make representations to Government in the public interest in reference to the lobster fisheries. There is no reason, so far as we can see, why they should not also in the same interest make representations to Government respecting the prohibition of the liquor traffic. And certainly this can be done without involving in either case any pressure of church upon state or any ecclesiastical action whatever.

As we have already intimated, we think our correspondent would have found this subject much clearer to himself and would have been able to make it correspondingly clearer to others if he had recognized that there is for the Christian an important sphere of action and duty as a citizen. The people are with us,—as of course they were not in New Testament times—the fountain of law and of government. The Christian citizen is a unit in that power which is behind the law, the legislature and the executive. As a servant of God, the Christian is entrusted with certain duties toward his country; he has responsibilities for the political and social well-being of the community and the nation. But whether in state or in church, in politics or in religion, he is to be first and always a Christian; he is to do what a follower of Christ should do and

leave undone what a follower of Christ should not do. Civil government has a divine as well as a human sanction, it depends upon moral as well as upon material forces and this is the more true as it comes to embody in itself more and more largely the elements of Christian citizenship. There is more, therefore, behind civil government than the material might of armies and navies. God is in the nation as truly as in the church, and the Christian serves God as truly and acceptably in performing the duties which belong to him as a citizen as in those which belong to him as a member of the church. We lay the more emphasis upon this point because there is unquestionably a great failure among professing Christians to acknowledge and courageously to discharge the duties which Christian citizenship involves. Practically, if not theoretically, it appears to be assumed that, while the Lord presides in the churches and gives abundant grace for every churchly duty, political affairs belong to a limbo in which the world, the flesh and the devil work without remedy or restraint. In the nation, quite as much as in the churches, there is need of a quickening of Christian life.

It must be sufficiently evident, we suppose, that Christians may act, and act effectively, for the legal suppression of the liquor traffic and for other ends to be sought through political channels without involving any ecclesiastical action. It is quite true, however, that our churches are accustomed to act either singly or as associations or conventions to press upon the civil authorities the desirability and duty of enacting and enforcing laws in the interests of temperance reform. Whether this is agreeable to scripture precept and example or in strict accordance with the Baptist doctrine of the separation of church and state is certainly a question which will admit of some discussion. We have not space at command to deal with it further at present. Perhaps we shall be favored with the thoughts of some of our brethren of light and leading upon this subject—"Noblesse oblige," brethren.

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### Mr. Higgins' Resignation.

As the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR were informed last week by the Secretary of the F. M. Board, Rev. W. V. Higgins has reached the conclusion that his return to India is not practicable under present conditions and has therefore reluctantly severed his official connection with the Telugu mission. This step is taken, as we are informed, solely on account of Mrs. Higgins' health, which continues so delicate as to make it extremely doubtful that she will ever be able to resume residence in India. The resignation of Mr. Higgins is not only a most trying experience to himself and Mrs. Higgins but a matter of deep regret to the Board, the missionaries in India and to all the friends of the mission. Probably no more efficient missionary has ever been sent by our churches to the Telugu field. He had energy, ability, zeal, knowledge of the conditions of missionary work, such mastery of the language as few are able to attain so early in life, and, with the fullest confidence of his brethren on the field and in the churches at home, it appeared as if a career of great usefulness as a missionary in India were before him. As so often has happened, we are disappointed. The Lord of the mission seems to have ordained in this matter something other than we had hoped for and expected. It is well for us to remember that neither His wisdom nor His regard for the Telugus is less than ours. We can afford to accept in faith what He ordains.

"God is His own interpreter  
And He will make it plain."

We should be unworthy of our high calling as a people of God, appointed to declare His salvation among the heathen, if our hands grew slack or our hearts grew faint because of some difficulties and some mysterious providences. Our Brother Higgins' missionary experience and missionary zeal will not be wasted here as a pastor in the home land. During the past year that he has been with us he has done much to promote interest in this great cause, and while he remains with us that influence will doubtless make itself strongly felt. We understand that Mr. Higgins is now open to a call to the pastorate. We need not say that, apart from his missionary experience, Mr. Higgins is a man of fine ability, possessing those qualifications as preacher and pastor which churches know how to value. Any of our churches which needs a pastor will be fortunate to secure him. His address for the present is Wolfville, N. S.

### Athens and Paul.

In the Bible lesson for the current week there is much to attract and to repay the labor of the student. The scene of the lesson is Athens,—

"Athens the eye of Greece,  
Mother of arts and eloquence."

representative of much that was most illustrious in the life and culture of the Greek civilization. Here were the representatives of Grecian philosophy, here were her courts, her schools, her temples of religion and of justice, her magnificence of architecture and sculpture and on every hand profuse evidences of her splendid genius and art. Here was the Stoic with his pride of virtue, the pleasure-loving Epicurean and the typical Athenian of the day,—a philosophic idler, the product of a degenerating age, who spent his days in hearing or in telling some new thing. Here also were abundant evidences of religious instincts and beliefs, once strong and dominant but growing pale and effeminate under the influence of aestheticism and unbelief. Into this Athens came Paul the Apostle of the Christian faith. That picture of the apostle preaching on Mars' Hill is in the highest degree significant. There stood the little Jew, alone and friendless, confronted with all the prestige and authority of Greek culture and civilization, the magnificence and splendor of its art, the pride of intellectual supremacy, the countless idols and inscriptions to heathen divinities,—there stood Paul, his spirit deeply stirred, and looking into scornful, smiling faces of supercilious Athenians, preached Jesus Christ as the one Saviour and the final Judge of men.

Paul did not speak in vain. There were some even in Athens who had ears to hear his message. There was Dionysius, the Areopagite, the woman Damaris, and some others. But there was comparatively little response. Athens was in her own estimation too great and rich to need or to care for Paul's gospel, and the apostle soon turned his steps elsewhere. If we go back in imagination to that day and that scene when Paul preached on Mars' Hill, Athens and all that it represents seem very great and the Christian preacher and his message seem insignificant. But what of these two contrasted things to-day? Where is Athens now, her art, her eloquence, her philosophy, her numberless statues and inscriptions to gods named or unnamed? Where is the proud city, her temples, her heroes and her gods? These things are of the past. They are fallen into ruin or are treasured only in history. But the gospel which Paul declared to be the power of God and which he preached as the hope of the world has not lost its ancient power. Paul is vindicated before Athens and the world. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men," and "the weakness of God is stronger than men."

There is a great deal in the world to-day that arrays itself on the side of Athens and opposes itself to the gospel. The service of many is given to art or philosophy or literature, not to Christ. The world and its authority are recognized as supreme, and religion, if not utterly rejected, is so overgrown by worldliness, skepticism and aesthetic formalities as to rob it of any valuable inspiration for life and service. There are many places where the gospel in this age seems to be preached in vain, or almost in vain. It is surely evident from the past and from the present that it is not every man or every community that has ears to hear. There are still those who hear as Athens heard and perish as Athens perished. But the Word of God is not bound, and the gospel is not discredited. Nothing has so triumphed in the past. Nothing in the present day is so charged with gracious power, and in the future it is this Christ whom Paul preached and Athens rejected who will go on conquering and to conquer, until every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue acknowledge him Lord. For to the eye that is willing to see and to the ear that is willing to hear it becomes more and more plainly evident that God "hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised him from the dead."

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