

Messenger and Visitor

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REFORMING THE SALOON.

The opening of the "Subway Tavern" in New York, near the Bleeker street subway station, which took place a few weeks ago, has been the subject of voluminous comment by the press both secular and religious. The unusual interest taken in the opening of this particular tavern or saloon is in part due to the fact that it is operated by methods somewhat different from those which usually obtain in the conduct of the retail liquor business and in part to the peculiar circumstances attending its opening. The Subway Tavern, we are told, is owned and operated by a company formed on the same plan as the English Central Public House. Trust of which Earl Grey is the promoter. The New York Company has a capital of \$10,000, subscribed largely by prominent men in the City Club, and the avowed object is to eliminate the worst features from the liquor traffic. Pure liquors are to be supplied and good food is to be sold at low prices. The expectation of the promoters is that, by these means and by discouraging the treating custom and refusing liquor to men intoxicated, the saloon will be rendered more respectable in character and less injurious in its effects.

But what has principally called attention to the Subway Tavern and the general undertaking of which it is a part is the fact that one of its principal promoters is Bishop Potter of the Protestant Episcopal Church, who also conducted a religious, or semi-religious service, at the opening of the Tavern. That so distinguished a minister of the Episcopal Church in America should be found blessing what the ministers of all religious bodies in the country have generally been accustomed to curse, is a fact sufficiently remarkable to call forth on all hands a variety of comment, and it is not surprising that a great deal of it should be strongly condemnatory of the Bishop's course.

It will be wise, however, to refrain from passing any uncharitable judgment on Bishop Potter. We may feel sure that he has at heart the welfare of the people who frequent the New York saloons, that he has given to the problem presented by the moral conditions obtaining in that great and crowded community a much greater measure of thoughtful study than have most of his critics and that he is entirely sincere in his belief that the undertaking represented by the Subway Tavern will result in good. No one who knows anything of the Bishop's character and work will for a moment charge him with any desire to promote the evils inseparable from the liquor traffic. Doubtless he would gladly sweep away the saloons of New York if he could, but recognizing that to be impracticable he thinks that he will be serving the interests of humanity if he can improve their character.

But while recognizing Bishop Potter's high character as a Christian minister and a philanthropist, as well as the excellence of his intentions, we have small faith in his undertaking for the reformation of the saloon. In our view there is in the saloon so much of the essence of all evil that the only reformation of it that can be effective is to reform it out of existence. Bishop Potter and those who are united with him in this scheme of reform seem to expect that men will be glad to leave the more respectable saloons to patronize the Subway Tavern. But this is more than doubtful. The man who has become a frequenter of the low saloon is not likely to be attracted by the decency and good order which are held out as inducements at the Subway, while those who patronize the more respectable saloons will probably find things more to their liking in their old haunts than in the quarters to which the bishop and his friends invite them. For a few weeks, while it is a new story, the Subway Tavern will doubtless draw custom from the higher and lower strata of drinkers; after that it will take its place among the more respectable saloons of the city and, like others of its class, will be patronized by the more respectable drinkers.

Even admitting that the Subway Tavern and other places of the kind which it is proposed to establish may have some influence to make the saloon life of New York less vicious and degrading than it is at present, there is another side to the question, and one must ask, Even if something desirable should be accomplished, would not this be more than offset by influences for evil which would be set in operation?

As things now are in New York, as well as in other cities, a considerable percentage of young men conscientiously regard the saloons as embodying influences which are essentially evil and should be strongly antagonized. But if so distinguished a minister of religion as Bishop Potter sees so little essentially evil in the saloon that he can extend to it his sanction, ask the blessing of Heaven upon its business, and join in a doxology in celebration of its opening, may we not expect that many will be led to revise their estimate of the saloon and conclude that an institution which a bishop can bless cannot be worthy of their condemnation and many be worthy of their patronage? The strength of the temperance position at the present time consists largely in the conviction on the part of Christian men that indulgence in intoxicating drinks is an evil, that the saloon is a thing to be antagonized and that saloon keeping is disreputable. To break down this conviction by making the saloon and its traffic respectable in the eyes of the Christian community is to do irreparable injury to the cause of temperance reform.

The Independence of the Church.

Dr. Strong in his Theology tells us that "the individual church may be defined as that company of regenerate persons who, in any given community, unite themselves voluntarily together, in accordance with Christ's laws, for the purpose of securing the complete establishment of his kingdom in themselves and in the world." Dr. Hovey in his standard work on the same subject says, "the word church is used to denote a society of baptized believers maintaining together the worship and ordinances of Christ according to his revealed will."

With Baptists these congregations of believers are expected to enjoy a large amount of freedom. Christ only is the head of each, and to him are they answerable. But while thus individually independent and self-governing they may by delegates unite for general purposes in the extension of the kingdom. These fraternal gatherings, composed usually of the messengers of the churches, with their bishops or pastors, may go so far as to have advisory powers or relations touching the affairs of the individual church. But in no case can these powers be regarded as legislative or compulsory.

The New Testament does not give us any authority higher than that of the church itself. The violation of this important principle has led to the troubles and difficulties found under episcopacy and all State churches, attaining their most pernicious development under the church of Rome. There this system reached its culmination. As the outcome of that departure we have the religious wars of the middle ages, the persecutions of the Moravian, Swiss, Dutch, and other Christians, and general interference with all civil and religious rights. Because of it the fires of Smithfield burned, the massacre of the Huguenots was possible and the terrors of the inquisition raged until evangelical religion was banished from Spain. All these and much more simply as a result of a vitiated interpretation of the spirit and genius of the Christian church.

Against encroachments of this character Baptists have ever entered solemn and emphatic protest. To us the individuality of the church and its supremacy in spiritual things are of profound importance. Any tampering with the church's prerogatives is sure to lead to disastrous results. Very soon does the drift run to ecclesiasticism until the democratic character of the gospel church gives way to the domination of individuals or to some extra-scriptural organization which has usurped the church's rightful authority.

Not too strongly then can we emphasize the independence and freedom of the individual church. Dr. Strong says "since each local church is directly subject to Christ, there is no jurisdiction of one church over another, but all are on equal footing, and all are independent of interference or control by the civil power."

Dr. Hovey also adds "the members of a church cannot transfer their authority to others for it is intrusted to them; and the use of it is a duty no less than a right. They may do a particular act agreed upon through representatives, but there is no scriptural ground for more than this."

No fear need ever be entertained by any church among us that the findings or decisions of general bodies will be enforced upon it. While each church is correlated with sister organizations and co-operates with them for the general good, it yet retains its individuality, its standard of doctrine and practice, its absolute freedom in the administration of its own affairs. While any fraternal gathering, associations, conference or convention may give advice and suggest courses of discipline or even lay down doctrinal statements, in no case do Baptists accept the idea that such decisions or standards are final or that they can in any case supersede or supplant the ultimatum of the church itself. To that decision all else must yield and from it there is in the New Testament no higher court of appeal. M.

THE WAR IN THE EAST.

The battle which raged in the vicinity of Liao Yang for the space of ten days—from August 24 to September 4—will, it is believed, take place among the bloodiest in ancient or modern history. The fighting, according to all

accounts, was of the fiercest and most determined character. It is said that about half a million men were engaged, and the awful conflict was continued, it would appear, until both armies were exhausted. The result of the terrible fight cannot at present writing be fully stated. It is known that the list of killed and wounded on both sides is very large. The Russian losses for two days—August 31 and September 1—are estimated by a Russian General at 7,000, and he held that the losses of the Japanese must be far greater. And when it is considered that fierce fighting extended over ten days, it is easy to believe that the carnage must have been appalling. It is known that General Kuropatkin was forced to abandon the town of Liao Yang, and the strongly fortified positions in the vicinity, destroying his arsenal and stores in the town, that he crossed the north bank of the Taitse river and that he has retired toward Mukden which is 35 or 40 miles north of Liao Yang, both places being on the line of railroad. And it is known that Liao Yang has been occupied by the Japanese. It is known also that General Kuroki has north of the Taitse river a considerable force which would appear to be in a position to threaten General Kuropatkin and his line of communication with Mukden and Harbin. But at present writing the despatches have not given us information concerning the relative position and strength of the two opposing forces necessary to estimating the probability of General Kuropatkin's being able to accomplish successfully a retreat to Mukden, without further material sacrifice of the strength of his forces. So far as appears at present, the Japanese have won a victory, but at very great expense to themselves as well as to the Russians. But if Kuropatkin is now able to withdraw his still powerful army to Mukden without any further shattering of his strength, the Japanese victory at Liao Yang will have been dearly bought. The latest despatches received at time of going to press indicate that the Russian rear is being harassed in their retreat and also that the Japanese are endeavoring with some hope of success to intercept the Russians and force them to give battle again before reaching Mukden.

Editorial Notes.

—Rev. D. Hutchinson wrote us under date of Aug. 30, "Next Sunday evening [i. e. Sept. 4] the Free Baptists of Moncton will unite with us in service and at the Communion table." From this and from a note from the clerk of the Moncton F. B. Church, which appears in another column, it is evident that in Moncton at least the Baptists and Free Baptists are practically one.

—It is not the last glass that ruins a man but the first, says a reformed drunkard who accordingly speaks from experience. On the same principle, men are ruined not merely in the low grogeries and disreputable saloons but in the decent places that are patronized by respectable drinkers. Many a man begins his downward career at the "respectable" saloon which he continues to frequent until he has become a drunkard and then he graduates to the groggery.

—The report of the Committee on obituaries adopted by Convention was prepared by Dr. E. M. Saunders. It made appropriate reference to the following brethren and sisters who during the year have entered into rest, Rev. Wm. D. Manzer aged 64, Rev. Horatio N. Parry aged 54, Rev. D. M. Welton, 11, D. aged 70, Rev. Samuel D. Irvine, aged 45, Mrs. J. T. Eaton, wife of Rev. J. T. Eaton, aged 63, who was for years a missionary to Burma, Mrs. Rachel Smith widow of the late Allison Smith, of Halifax. The Convention does not forget the services of these members of the body. May the relatives and friends be able to rejoice in the good work done by their loved ones "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."

—At its late session the British Parliament passed an act for the prevention of juvenile smoking, by which all persons under sixteen years of age are prohibited from smoking or using tobacco in any form under penalty of a fine not exceeding two dollars and a half for each offence. Any dealer who supplies tobacco in any form to persons under sixteen is liable to a fine not exceeding five dollars for a first offence and ten for a second offence, while for a third the dealer is deprived of his license for a term of five years. Such legislation may be more effective in England than it would be in this country, but it seems evident from the history of attempted anti-tobacco legislation in the Dominion Parliament that Canadian tobaccoists are much more afraid of a law which should prohibit the manufacture and sale of cigarettes than any attempt to prevent the sale of tobacco to boys through legislation of the kind which has been enacted by the British Parliament.

—"Allowing the individual the right to interpret for himself within the lines which mark denominational cleavage and the right to a loyal endorsement of the truth as personally conceived, nevertheless," says *The Standard of Chicago*, "there is demanded to-day a more practical union of the organized forces of the Christian church. There is a waste of power at some points without the adding of effective strength to truth in having so many organizations which are so much alike. There can be no valid human reason why two religious organizations like those of the Baptists and Free Baptists should not be one actually as well as theoretically. Bodies whose differentiated beliefs are at the