

Messenger and Visitor

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Is it Wise?

A measure has just passed its final reading in the Canadian House of Commons, which we are inclined to think does not do honor either to the head or the heart of that august body. The measure alluded to is described, we believe, as a bill to restrict the importation and employment of alien labor. It is obviously and confessedly a piece of retaliatory legislation, called forth by the alien labor law of the United States, which disadvantageously affects a considerable number of Canadian citizens. That United States law stands as evidence of the fact that a great nation can do some very small things, but it does not justify Canada in an attempt to emulate the great nation in that particular. We are not quite sure with whom or on which side of the House this retaliatory measure of ours originated. For our present purpose it does not matter. To our mind this kind of retaliatory legislation is altogether a mistake, to put it on no higher grounds, though certainly we might in all conscience put it on higher grounds than that of political expediency. One honorable member in supporting the bill said, with a sort of grim ingenuousness, that it was "a case of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." It is indeed, and the fact should be sufficient to mark it as an anachronism in legislation at the end of the nineteenth century of the Christian era. But if legislation of such a kind cannot be defended on high moral grounds, it can no more be defended on grounds of national dignity or wise policy. What has Canada to gain by retaliatory legislation? She may indeed thus give expression to a sense of uncourteous treatment at the hands of her powerful neighbor, and wreak a poor revenge on a few hundreds or thousands of United States citizens who are finding profitable employment in this country. But on the other hand she provokes further action of a similar character on the part of her powerful neighbor, and this game of retaliation is one in which the greater country, with the larger resources, is pretty sure in the long run to get the best of it. To encourage an international policy which must tend to create and to promote friction and unkindly relations between the two countries is the height of un wisdom for Canada. Let the United States, at least for the present, have a monopoly of alien labor legislation. If our Parliament should content itself with addressing to the United States Government a courteous protest in this matter, pointing out the disabilities to which Canadian citizens are subjected in that country in comparison with privileges which are accorded to United States citizens, on this side the line, it would be both more dignified, more honorable, more conducive to self-respect and more adapted to secure advantage to Canada—not to speak of it being more in accord with Christian teaching—than any resort to retaliatory legislation.

Principles of Christian Conduct.

In the Bible lesson for next Sunday we find Paul in his letter to the Romans dealing with matters of great practical importance to those whom he addressed and more or less to all Christians of his time. The peculiar conditions and consequent courses of conduct among Christians which called forth the apostle's admonitions were different from those with which we have to do in our day, but questions are constantly arising, and to which the principles which he so luminously sets forth are forever applicable and forever of the highest importance.

In the first verse of the lesson, in saying, "But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? or thou

again, Why dost thou set at naught thy brother?" Paul is addressing two classes of persons who needed special admonition in regard to their relations to each other. This will appear very plain by reference to the preceding contest. The coming together of Jew and Gentile in the church and in the fellowship of Christ had naturally given rise to questions of conscience touching food and drink as well as touching the observance of religious days and ceremonies and other matters of conduct. The Jew, whose mind and conscience had been educated by the law and the Mosaic ritualism, occupied, or was likely to occupy, a point of view as to what was right and wholesome in Christian conduct quite different from that of his brother who, previous to his conversion, had lived the free life of a Gentile and whose conscience was not bound by any sense of obligation to conform his conduct as a Christian to the laws and ceremonies of the Mosaic economy. There were indeed some—perhaps not a few—Jewish Christians, of whom Paul himself was an eminent example, who had come to accept the larger faith and fellowship. They believed that meat did not defile a man, they held that no one had a right to judge a Christian in regard to meat or drink or the keeping or not keeping of a holy day. There were Gentile Christians, too, who were strong in the faith. They knew that an idol was nothing in the world and that the offering of meat and drink before an idol was but a meaningless heathen ceremony which did not in the least injure the food so devoted or constitute a reason why a Christian might not partake of it with a good conscience. But there was also, as we have intimated, another class of Christians of whom the man whom Paul speaks of as "weak in the faith" is the type. He might be a converted Jew who retained a Jew's scrupulousness as to clean and unclean meats and holy days, or he might be a Gentile who had brought over with him into Christianity "a conscience of the idol" he had been accustomed to worship and who could not divest himself of the feeling that eating meat or drinking wine which had been devoted to a heathen god meant something.

The first class of persons—those who are spoken of as "strong"—when they were guests in the house of a brother Christian or in the house of some unbeliever could eat whatever was set before them, without feeling under obligations to ask any questions. The weak brethren on the other hand felt constrained to ask questions for conscience sake. They must know that the food set before them was, in a ceremonial sense, "clean," or that it had not been devoted to any idol god.

Here, it is easy to see, were conditions which, from a human point of view, were likely to lead to a sad lack of fellowship and to positive divisions and antagonisms in the Christian communities unless there were established principles of Christian unity on which all who were loyal to Christ and to conscience might, notwithstanding their differences of conviction as to matters of conduct, live together in peace and holy fellowship.

Paul strongly admonishes the weak brother—the man who is full of scruples as to what food it is permissible to eat and as to what days must be kept holy—that he is not to set up his conscience a standard of conduct for others. He is not to judge his brother because he does not follow the same rule of living. That brother also has a conscience, he is a servant of the Lord and to his own Master he stands or falls. There is One to whom each must give an account for himself. There is one judgment seat before which all must stand. But Paul does not fail to take account of the other side of the matter. The man of a larger and more intelligent faith has a duty of charity toward his weaker brother. The latter is not to be despised on account of his weakness. He has not perhaps fully grasped the fulness of the liberty which he has in Christ and cannot therefore accept and enjoy that liberty in so full a measure as the man who is stronger in the faith. Yet he also is a true servant of the Lord. For him Christ laid down His life. Who then shall set him at naught. "Destroy not with thy meat the brother from whom Christ died." To the strong brother it must be a matter of comparative indifference whether he should eat some things or refrain

from eating them, but it could never be a matter of indifference whether or not he should live in loving fellowship with Christ and His brethren.

The point which should be specially emphasized in connection with this lesson is the imperative and divine authority of conscience. It is less important that a man should be absolutely correct in his ideas as to what is right and what wrong than that he should faithfully perform what he believes to be his duty. Whether or not one shall exercise to the full, in regard to personal conduct, the liberty which he feels belongs to him as a Christian, is a matter of little moment. So also it is a matter comparatively unimportant whether or not one shall grasp in its fulness the idea of his liberty in Christ. But that he shall know Christ as Saviour and Lord and that he shall preserve a conscience void of offence toward God,—this is vital. Whatever tends to break down in the soul the authority of conscience turns the light that is in the man to darkness and tends to the destruction of spiritual life. Therefore, the divine admonition is—Be careful of your influence, see that the exercise of your liberty does not work irrevocable harm to your brother. Do not set him an example which he cannot follow without offence. Do not by word or act persuade him to do what he feels to be wrong. Scorn to promote your own material happiness at the expense of a brother's spiritual well-being. "It is good not . . . to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth."

Editorial Notes.

—The request which Bro. McIntyre makes in another column, on behalf of the church at St. Leonard's, for a Bible for the pulpit and hymn and Sunday school books, is one to which, we doubt not, some of our older and more wealthy churches will gladly respond. It might be a good idea that a repository should be established to which churches might send such books as they could spare, in order that they might be sent out thence to churches or mission stations which are not able to purchase books at first hand.

—The letter of Dr. Trotter in reference to our educational work, which appears in another column, will doubtless be read with interest by all the friends of the college and of the affiliated institutions. We trust that there will be a general coming up on the part of our Baptist people to the help of the new president of Acadia. The good and able men, who have preceded him, have been enabled to accomplish much through the steady and generous support which a loyal people have given them. What has been in this respect we feel assured will be in the future. Dr. Trotter, as we all believe, brings to his important duties, ability of a high order and of the character required in his position. But however much a leader may be a host in himself, he will need the support of a host which shall follow him and enthusiastically second his endeavors. Such support, we trust, President Trotter may find in the Baptists of these provinces by the sea.

—The London correspondent of the New York Sun professes to have received private advices from Constantinople which enables him to confirm without reservation the statement previously cabled that the British government had formally signified its opposition to the retrocession of Thessaly to Turkey. The announcement of Great Britain's attitude in this matter was made, it is stated, on May 22nd by Sir Phillip Currie to Tewfik Pasha, the Turkish minister of Foreign affairs, in the presence of the Russian ambassador, M. Nelidoff. In spite of the fact that the refusal of the Sultan will mean the withdrawal of England from the concert of the Powers. The belief is said to prevail in certain quarters that Turkey means to hold Thessaly at all hazards, and the extensive warlike preparations she continues to make, along with the fact that certain Turkish grandees have set up their establishments in Thessaly seem to lend color to the opinion.

—A terrible story comes from the Philippine Islands, which for barbarous and demoniacal cruelty one parallels anything which the darkest pages of the world's history presents. It is stated that twenty-five Roman Catholic monks were roasted to death, having first been thrust through while alive with bamboo poles, after the manner in which the natives are accustomed to roast sucking pigs. The deed, the truth of which is said to be vouched for by a prom-

inent resident confirmed by a statement by the sufferers by the soldiers.

—Mgr. Merrin some weeks ago, returning to Europe, will have a Roman Catholic speculation and clever a man doubtless have Canada and Canada possible for one formed opinions influence at the that the papal d the Archbishop Canadian prelat school question, it is unauthorized have been a man his own counsel.

—Whether or thing to do with clusion that follo logic of certain e Canada, and esp and Quebec, then to believe that th church in Canada and the question modified. The l formation from a worthy that the assurance of ment that the sch eral interpretation will refrain from authority, that of inent part in the s after the summ will nominate a r interests for appoi If it is true that t in the matter, it is ment that both Pr ing themselves de tor conciliation, lates who are resp

Rev. J. W. Illsley labor with the church time 14 young people June 6th. Mr. Illsley would be pleased to a Scotia which is his n Acadia and of Newto

Dr. T. H. Rand and John on Thursday las Parrboro, where they We were glad to somewhat fatigued will attend the closing next week, and later, Canadian Royal Soci

Our Ec

To the Members of the of the DEAR BROTHERS A ing upon work in beh at Wolfville, and shall the Presidency of Ac propriate that I should these institutions be become.

I trust I am sensibl work before me, and of the new position impa pathy and support of fessoriate, and the peo God, can I hope for l satisfaction to have len history no fact has b loyalty of the body to College. Were it other