

Messenger and Visitor

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THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER
VOLUME LXVII.

THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR
VOLUME LVI.

Vol. XXI.

ST. JOHN, N. B., Wednesday, January 4, 1905.

No. 1

Extending Liquor Licenses.

The thanks of the citizens of St. John or at least of as many of them as believe in the enforcement of the law for the restriction of the liquor traffic in the city, are due to Mr. Eben Perkins for the way in which he has brought the license commissioners to book, for their disregard of the law limiting the number of liquor licenses in the city to seventy-five. In the Police Court last week, Mr. Perkins charged against the commissioners that they had granted five more licenses than the law allowed and that a provision of the license law giving the commissioners authority, in certain circumstances, to grant an extension of a license for a period not to exceed three months had been abused, making the commissioners liable to a heavy penalty. The commissioners have virtually acknowledged the truth of these charges, and have promised that at least this feature of the license law shall in future be administered according to the statute. The defence, or rather the excuse of the commissioners for the course pursued by them in the past is understood to be, that they had acted in respect to the extension of licenses as their predecessors had done, also that they had been actuated by a spirit of charity and an unwillingness to deprive a poor man of his means of making a living. The defence is certainly a poor one. The fact, if it is a fact, that their predecessors had ignored the plain letter of the law and made themselves liable to its penalties, was surely no excuse for the present commissioners to do likewise. They were appointed to administer the law and not to dispense charity in the name of the city. The principle of the law is plain that the licenses should be restricted to seventy-five and any extension permitted was evidently merely for the purpose of permitting a person who had held a license which could not be renewed to close up his business, and was strictly limited as to time. It is gratifying to know that the commissioners are charitably disposed, but the sentiment of charity might surely as legitimately dispose them to regard the interests of those who are being ruined by the liquor business as that of the man who gets his bread and butter thereby. It would be a far higher exercise of charity to persuade the liquor seller to engage in a more honorable business.

Remarkable Revivals in England.

An Associated Press despatch reports a remarkable spread in the religious revivals which were started last September at Bolton, Lancashire, by Rev. R. A. Torry and Charles M. Alexander. The effects of the revival movement are noticeable everywhere in that part of England, and it is reported that the public houses are almost empty. Formerly they were crowded with drunken miners after working hours. Now in the Rhondda Valley in Glamorganshire drunkenness is almost unknown and prayer meetings are even held in the mines during working hours. The effect of the revival on popular sports is also remarkable, and several big football matches which would ordinarily have attracted the populace of the entire countryside have been called off because the best players refused to participate. One man it is said, has risen head and shoulders above all the rest until his name rings throughout the United Kingdom as the greatest revivalist of the day. He is Evan Roberts, 26 years old; formerly a miner, who goes from place to place, sometimes speaking entire days and nights, praying and singing, not sleeping and not resting. Roberts has been invited by the Nonconformists of London to visit the metropolis in January to conduct meetings. The Rev. Mr. Torry and Mr. Alexander are active meanwhile. They too announce an invasion of London. They have taken the Royal Albert Hall, which seats 15,000 persons and there they will conduct a series of meetings, probably at the same time that Roberts is there. In fact, it seems now as if the revival movement has taken hold of England as it never has before in the history of the country.

Guessing Contests.

Attorney-General Moody of the United States has taken the ground in reference to certain guessing contests much advertised of late that they are in effect lotteries in disguise and should be treated as such. In connection with these contests thousands of persons invest small sums in the hope and expectation that luck will enable them to win large

sums in return. In this the great majority are of course disappointed. As in the lottery a very few draw prizes and the rest have their experience for the money invested. As a result of Mr. Moody's advice on this subject the privileges of the United States Mail which had been allowed to guessing contests though denied to lotteries, have been withdrawn. The most popular recent guessing contest has been in reference to the attendance at the World's Fair. It is estimated by Mr. Moody that probably a million persons have submitted guesses in connection with that contest in competition for prizes aggregating \$25,000. As 25 cents was paid for each guess the company would receive \$250,000. The total of the popular vote in the presidential election was also made the subject of a guessing contest. And in Canada the total vote for the late general election was exploited for a similar purpose. We noted with surprise that some of the most respectable daily papers in the country lent their columns to the advertisement of this guessing contest, an enterprise which had in it far too much of the character of gambling to be regarded as an honest and legitimate business enterprise. It would be well if the Post Office Department in Canada should adopt the same regulations towards such enterprises as are being enforced in the United States.

Promised Reform in Russia.

The eagerly expected reform manifesto of Czar Nicholas was issued on December 16. The document deals, under eight heads, with nearly all the subjects brought to the Emperor's attention by the memorial of the Congress of Zemstvo presidents, held in St. Petersburg in November. The manifesto is in some respects disappointing to the advocates of political reform in Russia. In particular it passes by without notice the demand voiced by the Zemstvo presidents for the establishment of a constitutional assembly, and in regard to the points which are dealt with the value of the imperial document may probably depend largely upon the interpretation given by the various committees as to the measure of liberty which it is possible to grant. The Czar however promises that each of the reforms proposed by the Zemstvos shall be referred to the council of ministers with orders to report promptly on the fullest measure of relief which can be accorded on the various subjects. The Czar's manifesto must be regarded as at least embodying important concessions to the demand for reform and as indicating an unwelcome disposition to encourage the expression of popular sentiment. The promise of liberty to the press looks especially in that direction. In brief, the subjects which will be referred to committees of the council of ministers for early report are:

- First—A just and equitable enforcement of existing laws with a view to securing the harmonious administration of all the courts.
- Second—Zemstvo organization, with a view to giving the widest latitude and autonomy to the various district Zemstvos, calling additional Zemstvo representatives where required and creating small Zemstvo units capable of dealing directly with the local needs of the peasants.
- Third—Equality of all citizens before the law, thus touching the much mooted question of peasant equality before the courts.
- Fourth—Arranging a scheme of workmen's assurance for the benefit and protection of factory workers throughout the empire.
- Fifth—To secure citizens against arbitrary arrest and to accord immunity from harsh action of the police except in the case of persons known to be conspiring to commit overt acts against the stability of the state.
- Sixth—The religious freedom of all subjects of the empire without respect of creed or manner of worship.
- Seventh—For rescinding all unnecessary repressive laws, leaving in force only those designed for the protection of peasants and for the benefit generally of subjects of the empire.
- Eighth—To accord the fullest possible measure of liberty to the press and the removal as far as possible of the various restrictive laws.

Church Union.

During the week before Christmas there took place in Toronto a Conference of the special committees appointed by the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches of Canada to consider the question of organic union. The Conference appointed five standing sub-committees on the subjects of Doctrine, Polity, the Ministry, Administration and Law. These committees will meet from time to time and further consider the problems which must be overcome in order to bring about the de-

sired union. The sub-committees are made up two-thirds each of Presbyterians and Methodists and one-third Congregationalists. At the close of the conference a statement prepared by the secretary of the joint committee was handed out containing an official synopsis of the proceedings of the three days meeting. It contains little that is new. It states that the interchange of views was marked by the utmost freedom, but was pervaded throughout by a spirit of kindness and mutual forbearance. The Presbyterian and Congregational committees, as the result of their deliberations, reported without comment in favor of the appointment of sub-committees, but the Methodist committee report contained an expression of opinion that while difficulties may present themselves to all of the churches there does not appear to be any insuperable barrier to the union of the churches as suggested and promoted by our general conference. After giving the names of the five sub-committees, the statement concludes: "It should be understood that the committees above named will not be engaged at present in preparing a basis of union but will meet together for further conference to exchange views and ascertain whether it will be practicable to reach a common basis that might hereafter be submitted to the churches concerned. It is universally recognized in the joint committee that a question so important and far-reaching in its results was not one to be unduly hurried; that a union of the churches to be real and lasting must carry the consent of the entire membership, and that as final step could be taken until ample opportunity had been given to consider the whole question in the courts of the various churches and by the people generally."

The Toronto Globe editorially expresses warm appreciation of the ideals and the practical work of McMaster University. "More and more as the years pass into decades and the decades into centuries," says the Globe, "the full significance of what Mr. McMaster did when he furnished the Baptist people of Canada with the means of establishing a full fledged university will become clear not to the members of their denomination alone, but to the whole community. That the academic ideals for which the university stands were those of Mr. McMaster himself could easily be established if proof were necessary. Even critics who may feel disposed to dissent from some of them will readily accept their testimony to his natural greatness of mind and his practical common sense. Like Mr. Carnegie and Sir William Macdonald, he preferred to see his donation applied under his own eye to the purposes he aimed at accomplishing. Prominent, if not pre-eminent, among them was the blending of secular with religious culture under the personal influence of a staff carefully selected with an eye to this very aspect of academic work. The minimization of academic thoroughness on its secular side was no part of his intention and has not been any part of the result. In fact, McMaster stands high for the robust culture of its graduates wherever these come into comparison or competition with the graduates of other universities on this continent. . . . Owing to its denominational character there is a distinct advantage in being able to co-ordinate secular and theological courses so as to make them practically substitutionary instead of mutually exclusive. A similar co-ordination has in the University of Toronto made it possible to economize the time of intending divinity students in the affiliated theological colleges, and also of intending medical students in the university's own faculty of medicine."

In view of this parallelism of academic evolution, the Globe says:

"It may sometime occur to the management of McMaster University to inquire whether the ideal of its founder would be impaired either in letter or in spirit by entrance into the Provincial federation of universities with a view to sharing in the provision made in the University of Toronto for the free teaching of science and part of the foreign languages to the students enrolled in the federating institutions. The proprietors and patrons of McMaster bear their share of the cost of this science teaching now and they would have to pay no more for it under federation while they would have in the prescription of work an influence proportioned to the efficiency of their representatives on the Provincial University Senate. There would be a decided advantage to the Baptist denomination in being able to devote all their funds to the limited art course of the colleges and the development of the theological faculty, whether there are offsetting disadvantages not obvious to outsiders is for the authorities of McMaster University to decide for themselves. Should they ever elect to come into the Provincial system they would receive a hearty welcome from all who are in it now."