

Messenger and Visitor

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Prohibition and Direct Taxation.

In saying the other day that the proposed prohibition of the liquor traffic is one of the most difficult subjects with which the government has to deal, Mr. Laurier made a remark which will be generally endorsed by those who have any adequate understanding of the conditions which the problem involves. Any government which honestly and earnestly sets itself about the solution of this difficulty, should have, in this endeavor, the sympathy and support of all who believe in prohibition as a means and a method of moral reform. One of the problems connected with the subject is the necessity of making up the deficit in the revenue which prohibition would involve. All right-thinking men, whether prohibitionists or not, will be willing to face this difficulty squarely and consider it on its merits, but prohibitionists will be likely to resent quite distinctly any attempt, from whatever source it may come, to magnify this difficulty into a bugbear out of all proportion to its real character. But this, it appears, indicates a line of attack which the enemies of prohibition have judged will be particularly effective. Certain newspapers which it is to be hoped draw their inspiration in reference to the subject from a source quite distinct from the government, apprehending well the popular antipathy to direct taxation have been holding this terror before the eyes of their readers in a manner which, no doubt, it is shrewdly judged, will have a good deal of effect in cooling the zeal of those who are inclined on principle to support the cause of prohibition. In their discussion of the subject the prospective loss of revenue to all treasuries—Dominion, provincial and municipal—is calculated at extreme figures and made to amount to \$10,000,000, while the fact that this great sum is only one tenth of the cost, directly and indirectly, of the liquor business to the country, is cleverly kept out of sight. No account is made of the revenue which, under prohibitory law, the Government would be able to gather from the sale of alcoholic liquors for legitimate purposes, but, on the other hand, it is assumed that the whole of the ten millions must be raised by direct taxation, and that consequently prohibition would involve a direct assessment equal to two dollars per year for every man, woman and child in the Dominion. Then it is calculated what, on such a basis, would be the share in this direct tax of a given province, a county or a city, and the alarming results are presented to the imagination of the tax-payer.

It is quite right that this whole subject should be thoroughly discussed and considered from all points of view. The financial side of the matter and its effect on the taxpayer should not be lost sight of. A prohibitory law which did not have back of it the hearty and intelligent support of a majority of the taxpayers of the country would be fore-doomed to failure. But the statement that the adoption of prohibition would necessarily involve the raising of ten million dollars by direct taxation, is an assumption wholly unsupported by facts, and that manner of presenting the matter appears to us to be very far removed from a candid discussion of the subject. The Montreal Witness is right in its contention that the plebiscite on prohibition should not be put to the electors in such a way that in voting for prohibition they would be compelled to vote also in favor of direct taxation. "All that the Government can rightly ask is," says the Witness, "Are you prepared to face whatever extra taxation may for a time be rendered necessary by the loss of liquor revenue?" Such a question would not lay the responsibility of the form of taxation on the people, but entirely on the Government, in which case we may be sure it will be laid on, not in the form most offensive to the people, as certain papers assume, but in a form as agreeable to the people as can be devised."

Works the Proof of Faith.

Our Bible lesson in the International series for the present and the following week are taken from the epistle of James. It is somewhat difficult to understand why those who arranged the series were led to break the continuity of the lessons in the Acts by introducing, at this point, these lessons from James. The passage selected from the epistle are in themselves highly instructive and time spent in the study of them will be time well spent, but the more advanced classes should study the epistle as a whole and in comparison with the reported addresses and the epistles of Paul and Peter. It is worth while to observe that James' epistle, though doubtless intended especially for the perusal of believers in Christ is not formally addressed to Christians, but to "the twelve tribes of the Dispersion." Except in the greeting, where the writer calls himself "a servant of God and of Jesus Christ," the name of Jesus is mentioned but once. There is in fact very little of the epistle which can be regarded as distinctively Christian or which, so far as the form of it is concerned, any pious Jew might not have addressed to his brethren of the Jewish faith. The aim of the writer appears to have been to write in such a way as not to arouse prejudices against his Christian position but to obtain as wide a reading as possible for his epistle among Jews, both those who had and those who had not accepted Jesus as the Messiah. The aim and spirit of this epistle appears to be ethical rather than evangelical or doctrinal. There is here no declaration of the gospel plan of salvation, no setting forth of Jesus the Messiah in His relations to God and to men, whether Jews or Gentiles. In this respect the contrast between it and the letters of Paul and Peter is marked. There is a remarkable absence too of any direct expression of personality on the part of the writer and especially of personal relation to Jesus Christ, such as we find on almost every page of the writings of Paul and John as well as in the reported addresses of Peter and Paul.

James deals with what, for lack of a better name, are called practical matters. All that is essential to happiness or salvation is practical. A man is no less practical when he is engaged in digging a well than when he is watering his cattle at the well which has been digged. This illustrates in part the difference between James and Paul. Both were practical in different ways, since both labored intelligently and by inspiration for the glory of God and the highest well-being of mankind. What James says about faith may or may not have been written with a view to correcting certain erroneous inferences which "the unstable and unlearned" may have wrested from Paul's teaching in regard to faith. But, at all events, there is no real conflict between the teaching of the two writers on this point. James is here warning his brethren against a spurious faith which does not result in action. Such "faith," if it can be called faith, is as valueless as a barren tree or a well which yields no water. He does not pause to affirm, and certainly he does not deny, that the essential principle of Christian character is faith and that where such character exists its proper fruit is to be expected. This is Paul's line of teaching. James, approaching the subject from the other side, shows that where there are no fruits to indicate Christian character the claim of having faith is valueless and the expectation of being saved by faith is a delusion. Through such a faith a man would become, to use Paul's illustration, nothing better than "a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." It is as ineffective toward any good result as the hypocritical benevolence of one who should say to a brother or sister in sore need, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled, but give not the things needful to the body. A correct intellectual conception of truth does not save. The devils even may have that. Faith that is not more than a mere profession is vain. Abraham was not justified apart from works. His faith was far more than a theory, an emotion or an intellectual conception. It was something that moved him to undertake at the command of God that which it seemed supremely hard for him to do; even to lay his son upon the altar of sacrifice.

This teaching of James is opportune; it is always so. There is a strong tendency in human nature to separate religion from holiness of character and the practical fruit of it in Christian sympathy and self-denying helpfulness toward men. We need constantly to heed his reminder that the indication and proof of a living faith is works and that a faith without works is dead. We do well also to consider that our Lord Himself in His teaching makes the practical sympathy shown to His brethren the test of fellowship with Himself.

Editorial Notes.

—Many readers doubtless will have perused with profit Dr. Steele's well written and discriminating articles in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR of last week and the one preceding in review of Ian MacLaren's noted book, "The Mind of the Master." We are expecting another article or two from Dr. Steele's pen on the same subject.

—John D. Wattles and Co. Philadelphia, have issued a Chart of Paul's Journeys, prepared by C. E. Arnold, a. m., showing by means of five clear outline maps, the routes followed and the places visited by Paul in his journeyings. The chart as a whole may be seen at a glance. It is printed upon strong paper and folds within stiff cloth corners to a convenient pocket size. He gives at a glance information which every Bible teacher or student needs and will be found particularly useful in connection with the present international series of Sunday School lessons. The price is 20 cents.

—On another page will be found the programme of exercises to take place during anniversary week at Acadia. It is to be desired that as large a number as possible of those interested in our educational work should find their way to Wolfville next week. Those who do so will find the town and all that section of country very delightful at this season of the year, and the anniversary exercises are always of a highly interesting and enjoyable character. Those who visit Wolfville on these occasions for the first time are not only greatly delighted with the beauties of the place, but are apt to be surprised at the extent and character of the facilities which Acadia provides, and gain an enlarged conception of the educational enterprise in which the denomination is engaged.

—Mr. Moody's schools at Conventions at Northfield the present summer will probably not be less attractive and valuable than those of other years. The season will begin June 10th. Graduation day, at Mount Heimon is June 15, when the address will be given by Dr. Van Dyke, of New York. The World's Student Conference will be held from June 25th to July 4th. Among the speakers announced are President Patton, Drs. Van Dyke, Mackenzie, Schaffner and others. The Young Women's Christian Association Conference will be held July 9th to 20th, and will be addressed by eminent speakers both men and women. The general conference for Christian workers will be July 29th to August 16th. Among the speakers at this Conference are Rev. H. C. MacGregor of London, Rev. Campbell Morgan of Birmingham, Bishop Newman, Dr. H. C. Malie, Rev. A. C. Dixon and Rev. R. A. Torrey.

—The death of Rev. Herman M. Schaeffer, D. D., professor of New Testament Interpretation, and Pastoral Theology in the German department of the Rochester Theological Seminary, occurred recently, under sad and peculiar circumstances. He had been ill for some weeks and was sitting by a window. Having asked his wife to bring something that he wanted, he remarked, as she was leaving the room, that he wanted more air. He then evidently rose from his seat, raised the sash, and, being overcome by the effort, or an attack of heart failure, fell from the window to the ground, a distance of twenty feet, striking upon his head. He did not regain consciousness, but died almost immediately. The Examiner says of Dr. Schaeffer that he was "a man of genial personality, vigorous in mind and body, an able scholar and an earnest Christian. His death will be a heavy loss to the seminary."

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