

THE CHURCH VS. THE SALOON.

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THE saloon is the chief and most audacious law-breaker of the age. It is the arch-destroyer of all that is dear to man. It is sleepless, relentless, insatiable, mighty. There is but one power in the land that is stronger, and that is the Church. If the saloon is to be overthrown the Church must overthrow it. Will she? The question is one of purpose, not of ability. She can do whatever she will in this all-important work.

The service which the Church has already rendered in antagonism to the saloon is not, by any means, to be disparaged. On the contrary, it is to be acknowledged as well-nigh invaluable. More than all other agents she has rescued perishing inebriates and softened the hearts of those who were forcing their brothers down to drunkards' graves. She, more than anything or anybody else, has created the sentiment which rules dram-sellers out of respectable society and places drunkard-making in the list of crimes. Nearly all of her denominations have cried aloud against the drink traffic, and have denounced it in unmeasured terms; and some of those denominations have so legislated that none of their members can lawfully buy, sell, or use as a beverage the deadly liquid.

All honour to the Church for her warfare against the saloon! We give to her great credit and thankful praise. Unquestionably she has been and still is in the van. Nevertheless, we are persuaded that before she can fully accomplish the great mission to which we believe God has called her, she must take a much longer step in advance and strike far heavier blows. Her forces must be thoroughly and permanently organized, and, combined with kindred forces, must constitute the opposition. The foes of the saloon must unite against its friends. The issue must be squarely joined. The

saloon has long carried the black flag. Henceforth the Church and her allies in this particular warfare must carry it too. The battle must be desperately fought, and the field of battle must be the field of politics. This opposition must enter that field, just as did the opposition to the extension of slavery, and it must remain therein until Prohibition, like freedom, shall become an accepted doctrine against which no party shall dare to speak. From every organization that sympathizes or compromises with the rum-traffic Christian men must separate themselves and unite in an organization, every member of which shall at all times, including election days; and in all places, including the polls; and with all powers, including the ballot, stand against this giant evil of the day. The voting clergymen and laymen of the Church must become a unit on this great subject at the ballot-box—the point at which they have been divided in the past and are divided now.

Here is the difficult problem. But it could be solved, and it would be solved, were it not for the strength of old political party ties, than which nothing on earth seems to be stronger. In 1860-65 many a man who thought himself to be loyal to the nation to the last degree became a sympathizer with rebellion solely because of his love for a political party. And so to-day many a man who thinks himself to be a true friend of Prohibition becomes an apologist for the license system simply because he fears that the political party of his love may be harmed if Prohibition be insisted upon.

Bishop Forster forcibly and truthfully says:

“The Church of to-day, much more the Church of the future, must take to its heart the duty of combining and