

Messenger and Visitor

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Temperance Sunday and Temperance Education.

The Committee of our Maritime Baptist Convention on Temperance has requested that Sunday, the 26th inst., shall be observed in all our churches and Sunday Schools as Temperance Sunday. The lesson for that day in the International series—followed in most of our Sunday Schools—is upon "The Woes of Intemperance," and it is requested by the committee that pastors will preach sermons on temperance, and that such other efforts shall be put forth in the way of special services and addresses as in the judgment of the churches may be most effective in promoting the interests of the temperance cause. We have previously indicated our hearty approval of this request on the part of the Temperance Committee. In our opinion the committee is not unduly magnifying its office by endeavoring to do something in the line of educative work during the year for which it is appointed, and not considering its duties limited to the presentation to Convention at the end of the year of a report which may or may not voice the general sentiment of that body. What is of importance as an aim in this matter is not so much such an indication of sentiment as an annual temperance report may embody as the cultivation in the denomination of a temperance sentiment so intelligent, vigorous and pervading that, whether expressed in an annual report or not, it will count for something in the promotion of a real temperance reform.

We consider that the suggestion of the committee is a very timely one, because, if we are not much mistaken, our churches in general are doing much less than it is possible and greatly to be desired that they should do in educating the people in respect to the terrible evils resulting from the use of and the traffic in strong drink. In how many pulpits is there heard from one year's end to another a good, strong, educative discourse upon this subject? We do not mean at all to say there are not some pulpits in which such discourses are to be heard, for doubtless there are some, but how many? In how many of our churches is there ever made an effort to hold regular or even occasional meetings for the education of their congregations in all that pertains to an intelligent view of the drink problem and to their duty as Christians and as citizens in reference thereto? We are of opinion that there is no more hopeful field of effort open for the promotion of what is fundamental to the success of the temperance cause than that to which our churches are invited by the Convention's Committee.

However valuable to the cause may be the impassioned invective, of which at times one hears a good deal on public platforms, directed against everything which stands, or is supposed to stand, in the way of immediate legal prohibition of the liquor traffic, every thinking person must admit that, in order either to obtain prohibition or to make it effective when it shall have been enacted, there must be a pervading public sentiment, intelligently and profoundly convinced of the evils of the liquor traffic and therefore ready to give much more than a merely passive acquiescence in its suppression by force of law. Whether there is or is not such a public sentiment in Canada today as is necessary to assure the success of a prohibitory law, if enacted, we shall not here inquire, but we feel sure that no one will contend that the results of the plebiscite and all the facts bearing upon the question are so reassuring as to this vital point as to make it wise for temperance people to relax in any degree their efforts to make the temperance sentiment of the country as strong and as effective as possible. The promotion of a really effective temperance senti-

ment is a matter of education. Occasional denunciations of the liquor traffic and of all who are promoting or abetting it are easy enough, but, however vigorous and however righteous such denunciations may be, they will effect comparatively little unless backed by patient, positive work for the building up of a robust and lively public sentiment based upon an intelligent conception of what the question of temperance reform involves in its economical, social and moral phases.

This education should begin with the little child in the home, and if in many homes it is neglected, as unfortunately is the fact, there is all the more reason why it should not be neglected in the day school, the Sunday School and the church. There is an immense educative power in an orderly and logical presentation of facts, and we need not say that the facts in this matter are on the side of temperance reform. They are abundant, too, and easily available for the use of ministers and Sunday School teachers. It is open to the Sunday Schools and to the Young People's Societies to do an important educative work in the interests of temperance. And the pastor has ample opportunities in this respect. If the ministers of this country would make more of their opportunities, if they would deliver annually a short series of discourses, in which there should be a careful discussion in the light of the sacred scriptures, history and present knowledge, of the influence of strong drink upon the welfare of mankind, and in which also, in the light of all available information, there should be an adequate discussion of the effect of the liquor traffic upon all the interests—economic, social, moral, religious—of the nation, the result would be an influence more effective, perhaps, than any other that could be named, to establish a public sentiment which would work most powerfully for the suppression of the liquor traffic. We do not mean to discourage or to undervalue a general rallying of temperance forces on proper occasions, and a vigorous expression of sentiments and demands in the interests of temperance reform, but we have called attention here especially to that work of education which requires line upon line, and precept upon precept, because of its immense importance, and because we believe that at the present time it is being seriously neglected.

Editorial Notes

—As will be seen by Dr. Trotter's letter, which appears in another column, Wolfville has responded generously to Mr. Vining's appeal on behalf of the Northwest. Deacon Barss has also extended a liberal hand toward that important interest, as he has done recently toward the Foreign and Home work. In bestowing his means thus during his life time rather than leaving them in the form of bequests, Mr. Barss is setting an example which is worthy of all imitation on the part of those who have it in their hearts and in their power thus to contribute to the advancement of Christian enterprises.

—In last week's issue of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR there was published the first of a series of Normal lessons in Sunday School work. These lessons are being prepared by a number of our pastors, and it is hoped that they may be studied with profit by a large number of Sunday School teachers and those who are preparing for that important work. The lesson of this issue will be found on the eleventh page, and we purpose to place each succeeding lesson on that page, so that those who are studying the lessons may know just where to turn to them. Those who have undertaken to prepare the lessons are urged to complete their work as early as possible so that there may be no break in their publication.

—The death is announced of Dr. Culross of Bristol, and formerly principal of the Baptist college there. He had reached the age of seventy-five and had been for some years in broken health. Dr. Culross was a Scotchman, educated at St. Andrews. He was a man of fine gifts and considerable culture. As a writer he was master of an excellent style, and was well known through his contributions to religious periodicals and as an author of books, among which is an excellent life of Carey. He was pastor at Stirling, Glasgow and London, and though he never attracted large audiences, his preaching was of a character to minister edification. Mr. Spurgeon placed a very high value upon Dr. Culross' writings, and at one time wrote that he preferred him to all other living teachers. Possibly Mr. Spurgeon would have modified this judgment at a later period, as it is said to have been a grief to Dr. Culross that he felt constrained to oppose his friend in the "down-grade controversy."

—The papers of Monday morning announced the death of Sir William Dawson, which occurred at his home in Montreal about noon on Sunday. He was born at Pictou, N. S., in 1826, and at an early age began to show an interest in those studies of nature in which he afterwards became famous. He was educated at Pictou Academy and Edinburgh University. For a few years he was superintendent of Education for Nova Scotia, and rendered very important services to the educational work of the Province. In 1855 he was called to the presidency of McGill, and under his leadership the University has attained to a well-recognized place among the foremost institutions of learning on the continent. Sir William Dawson held a conservative position among scientists. He never accepted the more radical statements of the evolutionary theory. His great ability and scholarship were, however, respected in all quarters, and both as a scientist and an educationist he was recognized as one of the eminent men of his time. Sir William Dawson was a man of whom Canada was justly proud and his name and work will be held in most honorable remembrance.

—If there were no higher considerations on which the liquor traffic could be opposed, the indictment which lies against it on economic grounds would amply justify the most strenuous effort to secure its suppression. The dissipation and utter waste of national forces and resources involved in the direct and indirect destruction of valuable property, in the expense attending the punishment of crime and in lessening the productive power of the nation is immense and incalculable. Commenting upon the subject of the Bible lesson for the present week, Dr. Cunningham Geikie says: "Here in England the woes of intemperance may be judged by its sad consequences. Our drink bill for 1898 was nearly \$772,500,000, which comes to nearly \$33 to every living creature old enough to crave such drink. In my parish I found many workmen who drank over seven dollars a week out of a wage of ten dollars. Workingmen are three-fourths of the population, and it is believed that they spend \$500,000,000 yearly on worse than useless drink." And besides the direct, there is the indirect cost which can only be vaguely estimated, but which is enormous. In Canada the condition of matters in respect to the consumption of liquor is far better than in Britain, but even here the drain which the traffic imposes upon the national resources is tremendous. If what it is costing Canada year by year on account of the drink traffic could be saved and invested for the public good, the country might soon be without a public debt, poverty might be banished from every community, and all public works and interests abundantly provided for.

—A tragedy which affords a timely and striking commentary upon the Sunday School lesson of the current week occurred on the evening of November 11, on the schooner J. B. Vandusen, bound from St. John to an American port. As a result of that tragedy Captain George Baisley, the master of the Vandusen, a young man of fine physique, and one who also enjoyed a good reputation as a master mariner and a citizen, lies in his grave today, his wife a widow, his child fatherless, and Elmer Maxwell lies in jail charged with having, with malicious purpose, caused the death of Captain Baisley. There can be no doubt that the inciting cause to this murderous deed was strong drink. It is probably true that Maxwell was not drunk when he struck the fatal blow, that he knew quite well what he was doing and acted with murderous purpose. On the other hand it is plain enough that drink and drunkenness were at the bottom of it. If there had been no liquor there would have been no murder. Maxwell had formerly had a position as mate and had lost it through drunkenness and had engaged with Captain Baisley to go the trip as a common seaman. Then he had gone away and got drunk and had brought liquor on board the vessel. Then, some hours afterwards, when waked from his drunken sleep, he showed bad temper, refused to go to work, and, when roughly handled by the Captain, was seized with insane passion and struck the murderous blows which had so terrible a result. It is not to be denied that the man is responsible, because a man is responsible for being drunk or a drunkard. Yet there is good reason to believe that Elmer Maxwell was not by natural disposition a blood-thirsty man. It was the strong drink which saloons, licensed or unlicensed, in every town puts in the way of the sailor, the terrible drink which shatters men's nerves and sets their brains on fire, that made a demon of the man. And what shall we say,—is it just and right to hang such a man or condemn him to a felon's cell for life, and never call to account the men and the business by which he had been enticed away from the paths of sobriety and made a drunkard and a murderer?

—"Do not expect others to do for you more than you are willing to do for others under like circumstances," is a precept which, though it falls far short of the divine breadth and positiveness of the Golden Rule, would nevertheless, if generally observed, prevent many an unreasonable expectation and much querulous speech.