

Messenger and Visitor

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Mr. Moody and Prohibition.

The anti-prohibitionists of Canada are not likely to lose sight of any incident which affords the promise of help to their cause at this time or to fail to make the most of any words spoken by men in influential positions, which can by any means be interpreted for the comfort of those who are interested in maintaining the liquor business. The use which some papers are making of certain statements of Mr. Dwight L. Moody, made recently in an interview with a representative of the Montreal Witness and published in this paper, show quite plainly what influences are at work in certain quarters, and also illustrates the method of argument which the defenders of the liquor interest are using in its behalf. Mr. Moody's remarks in the interview were characterized by his accustomed terseness of speech. They occupied but little space, perhaps a third of a column of the ordinary daily paper. But the papers which wish to use the incident to bolster up the rum business are very careful not to print in full what Mr. Moody said. A couple of sentences separated from their connection are given in such a way as to suggest the conclusion that the distinguished Evangelist, like Principal Grant, of Kingston, is on principle opposed to prohibition. This, as anyone who has read Mr. Moody's remarks as reported in the Witness knows, is far from the fact. Mr. Moody accepts the principle of prohibition. He accepts it heartily in the form of local option. He has evidently no sympathy with the position of Dr. Grant that a prohibitory law is wrong in principle and its results practically evil if enforced. His opposition to a prohibitory law is founded on the belief that in large cities, such as Chicago which he instances, such a law could not be enforced. His acceptance of local option argues that wherever there is a sufficiently strong sentiment in favor of prohibition it should receive the sanction of law. Mr. Moody would not favor a prohibitory law for the State of Illinois, because it would be quite impossible to enforce such a law in Chicago. A prohibitory law which is a dead letter, so far as the cities of a country are concerned, Mr. Moody believes it would be unwise to enact. If he considers the enactment of a general prohibitory law for this country to be unwise, his opinion is no doubt based on the assumption that such a law would not be enforced in the cities. But if it can be shown that, in putting a whole country under a prohibitory law, the conditions for its enforcement are made so much better than when it is applied to a single state or province that there would be a good prospect of its becoming effective for the suppression of the traffic even in the cities, then Mr. Moody's objection to a prohibitory law, so far as the case of Canada is concerned, would fall to the ground.

Mr. Moody is generally admitted to be a keen observer of men and things and a man of great shrewdness and strong common sense. Few men too can have had better opportunities for observing the results of the liquor business than the great Evangelist. What he says on this subject will naturally attract attention and receive the respectful consideration to which it is entitled. This is a reason why his position on this important question should be rightly understood and fairly interpreted. There seems to be good evidence, however, that he has not given to this subject as careful attention as he has to some others. In speaking to the representative of the Montreal Witness, Mr. Moody instanced Vermont as a local option state and remark-

ed upon the effective character of the prohibition which obtained there as compared with the condition of things in the cities of Maine. The illustration was certainly an unfortunate one for Mr. Moody for two reasons, both of which are involved in the fact that Vermont has a general prohibitory law.

Jesus and the Sabbath.

The dwarfed and impotent character of Jewish rabbinic teaching is perhaps in nothing made more manifest than in the narrow literalism and hair-splitting casuistry with which it interpreted the Sabbath law. The bigotry of these teachers, their slavery to literalism and tradition, had so dwarfed their religious natures and made them so incapable of large and just conceptions of man's relation to God that they seem to have lost sight entirely of the grand underlying truth that the Sabbath was made for man; and in their hands the Sabbath had become an instrument of religious tyranny, a fetter and a chain upon men's souls, rather than a helpful condition of spiritual life. In strongest contrast with the pettiness and inanity of much of the rabbinic teachings stands our Lord's interpretation of the Scriptures, in its large sanity and its divine illumination. He is as one who enters a long shut chamber, filled with dust and cobwebs, and, flinging wide its doors and windows, lets into every musty corner of it the sweet, fresh air and the pure sunlight of heaven.

When the Pharisees complained to our Lord that his disciples, in rubbing the ears of corn in their hands, as they passed through the grain fields, were breaking the Sabbath, his reply to them involves, as we understand it, the underlying principle that neither the Sabbath nor any other formal ordinance of religion is to be so interpreted and enforced as to interfere with the satisfaction of men's reasonable wants. The law that forbade labor on the Sabbath was not, like the law that commanded love to God and to men, always and everywhere authoritative. It was not *per se* a sin to do any work on the seventh day, for the priests in the temple labored on the Sabbath and were held blameless. Religious ordinances made for the good of God's children must not be so interpreted and enforced as to vex or injure those whom they were intended to bless. Thus David and his followers when they were an hundred had eaten of the shew bread which, according to the letter of the ordinance, it was not lawful that they should eat. The Sabbath was made for man. There was the great underlying fact, and the law must be interpreted in accordance with that principle. The Sabbath was intended to bless man by helping him to a fuller, richer religious life and by promoting his physical, intellectual and spiritual well-being. The spirit of every law is more important than its letter, and, in the sight of God, mercy is always preferred to sacrifice.

But if the Sabbath law properly interpreted did not forbid acts of necessity, still less could it be interpreted to forbid acts of mercy or compassion. Jesus was perhaps willing to endure hunger rather than offend the Pharisees by what he knew they would regard as an infraction of the Sabbath law, for in the matter of plucking the ears of corn, it was against the disciples only that the complaint was made. But Jesus could not forbear to perform an act of love when the case of some suffering or helpless one appealed to his compassion, and it was because his enemies knew this that they waited with malicious interest to see what he would do to the man with the withered hand. Once at least before this he had drawn upon himself the enmity of the Pharisees because he had healed a man on the Sabbath. It was in Jerusalem at the Bethesda pool that Jesus had seen a poor fellow, who for many years had been a cripple, and, perceiving that he had faith to be healed, he had spoken at once on the Sabbath day the healing word, bidding the man take up his bed and walk. That act had brought upon Jesus the fierce enmity of the Jews and whenever in his ministry such an act was repeated it served to embitter their hatred. But though it became more and more evident that these acts of healing on the Sabbath were arousing against him a hatred which could be appeased only by his death, he could make no concessions here. On no day of the week could he shut his eyes to the fact of human suffering, or turn away from the cry of any wretched man or woman. There was something greater than the Sabbath, and that was the divine love finding

expression in the Son of Man. The law of love is eternally supreme, and so it is always lawful to do good on the Sabbath. There has never a day dawned on the world too sacred and holy to be filled with deeds of love and mercy.

The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is for man's sake. God did not first ordain the Sabbath as the chief end of creation and then make man to fit into that plan as a subordinate consideration, as some modern people, as well as the ancient Pharisees, seem to think. God has given to the Christian world the first day of the week, as a day of rest and worship and religious activity, as truly as he gave the seventh day as a Sabbath to the Jews. Christ has given to his people a Sabbath which is not a rescript of the Mosaic ordinance, but which harmonizes with the larger, freer spirit of Christianity. If rightly conceived and observed, it expresses more of the positive spirit of the Christ. It is a day in which emphatically it is lawful to do good. A day in which the love and power of Christianity should find large expression. It is not for Israel only but for the world. It speaks not of a finished creation only, but of a finished redemption. It points to the glory of the resurrection and the power of the world to come.

Editorial Notes.

—Our Baptist brethren in Maine, we are pleased to note, are meeting with encouragement in the prosecution of their educational work. They had recently completed a subscription of \$50,000 as an addition to the funds of Colby University, thereby securing a grant of ten thousand from the American Baptist Education Society. And now it is announced that Hon. Chester W. Kingsley, of Cambridge, Mass., a member of the board of trustees of Colby has offered to the college, under conditions which it has been found possible to meet, a gift of twenty-five thousand dollars. Colby is certainly to be congratulated on the enlarged usefulness which these substantial additions to its funds make possible.

—Mr. Moody is asking for the prayers of all Christian people on behalf of the eight days mission which he purposes to hold in the Grand Central Palace, New York city, March 13-20. It is the intention to hold meetings morning, noon and night. The building is a very fine one for the purpose, its main auditorium having a seating capacity of 7,000, and there are two smaller halls on the same floor that can be used for overflow and enquiry meetings. The situation of the building too makes it convenient of access to a very large number of people. With the blessing of heaven upon the meetings, Mr. Moody hopes for excellent results. He asks that prayer be offered that God may endue with power all who shall preach or deal with enquirers and those who shall lead the singing, and that he may incline the hearts of the people to receive the gospel gladly.

—It is a great enterprise which the Wesleyan body of Great Britain is undertaking, that, namely, of raising a fund of a million pounds sterling to celebrate the beginning of the new century, now so close at hand. It is proposed that the money shall be expended largely in the erection of Methodist Central Halls in London and the other large cities in the interest of missionary work and education. "Few things," says the British Weekly, "are more helpful than greater visibility, and it is desirable that in London especially there should be more Nonconformist buildings that would force themselves on the public mind. Nonconformity must address itself to middle-class education in a manner not attempted—hardly dreamed of—yet."

—The Outlook does not believe that the pessimistic assertion, heard every now and then, that the race of great preachers is dying out, is justified by facts. "The call of Rev. Charles E. Jefferson to the Tabernacle pulpit, New York, the immediate mention of the Rev. Hugh Black, of Edinburgh, as successor to Dr. Hall, show that such pulpits are not peculiarly difficult to fill. When Dr. Dale passed to his rest, Rev. J. H. Jowett was prepared to take his place and carry on the work of Carr's Lane Chapel as efficiently as it had been administered by his distinguished predecessors. Every one familiar with the younger preachers of the United States knows that there are as many men of the first rank of preachers under forty as over." In this connection mention is made of the Rev. R. J. Campbell an English preacher in

the Congregational bell is a young man to be preaching in Leeds a congregation likened to Paul's audience in the equal of Macedonia people of the to say, "His wife."

—The Methodist brethren their brethren Century fund by the denominated Toronto, and Potts, Education in Canada, has proposed that a grand effort to tury by raising promotion of Dr. Potts and there should this enterprise 250,000 Methodist a dollar per hination would Potts thinks appropriated Superannuated educational vferences to be endorse the s can raise a m their denomin edly able to matter for the inces, with its for which Pro absolutely ne tional work.

—The Methodist meetings of Union, the Publication, year in Rochester the twelve Advocate ren that the Ann chester, which bility and be and the Theat attract a large

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DEAR EDITOR, hopefully in re den we have s are saying we c by the commit two-thirds of o Book of 1897 The pastors cheered us with tive churches. assigned quota cheerfully than agitation. A b my mind for co Baptist people and speedily brother." To surely say Am: Expecting to at the request of the MESSENGER act as Secretar church clerks k to him at 85 G I hope to hea Donald's gener \$5,000, is fully brethren, keepi burdened longe interest on mo believing he w beloved people. Not one of us reputation and carried on in our body as ha day of his burd of fair play and ye one another's