

THE TEMPERANCE CRUSADE.

PENNSYLVANIA.

A CAMPAIGN BEGUN IN PHILADELPHIA—
SEVERAL SALOONS VISITED—THREAT OF
A GERMAN TO SHOOT THE WOMEN IF
THEY ENTERED HIS SALOON.

Special Dispatch to the New-York Times.

PHILADELPHIA, Feb. 27.—To the general surprise, the campaign of the temperance women against the rum-sellers opened here to-day, and the inauguration of hostilities naturally enough created considerable excitement in the quarters of the city in which they began. Now that the ball has been opened, there is every prospect that it will make a clean sweep through the city. This afternoon a temperance meeting was advertised to be held at the Fiftieth Baptist Church, situated at Seventh street and Susquehanna avenue, in the Nineteenth Ward, of which Rev. E. C. Romine is Pastor. At the appointed hour the commodious church was packed with ladies, and expectation and anxiety were dominant. Mrs. Elizabeth J. French, a prominent temperance organizer, opened the meeting by a few words, in which she declared the object of the assemblage was to take some decisive action upon the temperance question; and after singing and prayer Mrs. French, who seemed to be the leader, made a brief but powerful address to the ladies upon the subject of intemperance, in which she depicted graphically the horrors of drunkenness. In closing her address she called for volunteers to accompany her upon a visit to the saloons in the vicinity. This unexpected turn of affairs fell like a thunder-clap upon the audience, but after the astonishment had in some degree subsided, about fifty women arose from their seats and expressed their willingness to join her in the crusade. The utmost excitement prevailed at this action, but not in the least deterred, Mrs. French walked down the aisle and was joined by the brave women who had enlisted for the warfare. The band then marched down Susquehanna avenue about two squares and stopped in front of a notorious saloon at Fifth street, kept by a woman. By this time, however, the news of the novel movement had spread like a whirlwind throughout the whole neighborhood, and a crowd composed of many hundred people collected around the praying band. Included in it were many roughs and disreputable characters, who jeered and blasphemed the Christian women, and several parties threw snow-balls into the ranks of the crusaders, one of which struck Mrs. French. Not in the least demoralized or discouraged, the gallant band assembled around the door of the saloon and sang a hymn, after which several earnest prayers were made, and the leader took the opportunity to say a few words about the ravages of strong drink.

The scene inside the saloon, while the besiegers stood upon the pavement in the front, was one of excitement and confusion. The proprietress, who had no intention of succumbing to the crusaders, was put to her wits' end for an expedient to baffle them. After the band had continued their exercises about half an hour without any success, the shutters and doors of the saloon were closed, and the women abandoned the situation and moved down the street, singing as they went. They were followed by the rabble, who hooted at them, mingling their shouts with curses and cries of derision.

Several saloons were visited, but upon the approach of the praying band were promptly closed. At the lager-beer saloon of a German, who keeps a cheap boarding-house in connection with his saloon, the women wanted to enter the bar-room to sing and pray, but the proprietor, who was very indignant at the whole proceeding, refused to allow them to do so, assigning as a reason that so much noise would disturb his boarders. Mrs. French inquired of him if he sold liquor, and he said he did. She then talked with him, and appealed to him to abandon his trade, and so eloquently did she appeal to him that he was melted to tears, and declared that he would do so. As no pledge was offered to him, he did not sign any promise, but expressed his determination to quit the business.

This was the first victory gained by the band, and so elated were they that the air rang with their shouts and songs. The band proceeded up Susquehanna avenue to the beer saloon of Jacob Overholtzer, at the corner of Susquehanna avenue and Thomson street. The crowd at this point was very great and the excitement growing every moment stronger. Mrs. French, from the steps to the private door of the saloon delivered a strong temperance speech, exhorting the crowd to discontinue the disorderly proceedings, and her band to carry on their exercises. At this point a number of Germans came out of the saloon, and denounced the women in strong terms, and finally the proprietor himself appealed to a policeman who stood upon the opposite corner to clear them away, but this he refused to do, stating as his reason, that he had no authority. One of the bystanders said to Overholtzer that the ladies could enter his place and he could not oppose them, and to this he angrily exclaimed, "Then I shall shoot them." This action somewhat dampened the spirits of the ladies, and it was concluded that it would be best to adjourn the crusade until to-morrow.

The band then went back to the church and reported the result of the invasion. The audience received the report with great enthusiasm, and it was decided to continue the campaign.

The liquor dealers of the Nineteenth Ward are terribly excited and enraged at the inauguration of hostilities, and, without doubt, will proceed at once to take some action to protect their interests. The greatest excitement prevails throughout Kensington to-night. The Nineteenth Ward contains some of the lowest dens in the city, and the liquor-dealers there are the most unscrupulous in the country.

Another prayer-meeting was held this afternoon at Germantown, under the auspices of Mrs. H. N. K. Goff. A feature of the meeting was an address delivered by Mrs. DeFerrest, of Ohio, who is fresh from the scene of the temperance war in that State. No action was taken, but it may be anticipated that hostilities will be opened in a few days.

MEETING OF THE PITTSBURG LIQUOR-DEALERS.

Special Dispatch to the New-York Times.

PITTSBURG, Penn., Feb. 27.—Numerous copies of a circular have been distributed in the city to-day in which all the arguments in favor of wine drinking to be found in the Bible are set forth. A secret meeting of the Liquor-dealers' Protective Association was held this afternoon, but the most industrious interviewing of leading members failed to elicit any information as to what was done. The feeling gains strength daily that the field here is too large for the accomplishment of much good by praying in the saloons. There are 1,400 places in the city where liquors are sold, and it is thought a sufficient number of ladies cannot be enlisted in the cause to do efficient work.

The New York Times

Published: February 28, 1874

Copyright © The New York Times