

[Fourth Universalist, Brooklyn NY]

ORDERED OUT

Congregation to Make Way for a Saloon  
The Fourth Universalist Notified to Vacate Ridgewood Hall  
Because Its Members Objected to Having a Barroom in the Building

The Fourth Universalist Society, which has worshipped under the successful ministrations of the Rev. Abram Conklin in Ridgewood Hall, at Lexington Avenue and Broadway, for several years, is looking for a new meeting place under peculiar conditions. Its landlord, Mr. C. T. Corbin, has ordered it to vacate at once, and his reasons for so doing have excited wide indignation in the Twenty-fifth ward.

Three or four months ago an application was made by a liquor selling firm for license to open a barroom on the lower floor of the building, and many of the church people and neighboring residents appeared before the Excise Commissioners to oppose it. They did this successfully, Commissioner Carroll expressing the reason for denying the request in the cogent remark that he did not believe in having facilities for reaching perdition in the same structure with a church. This apparently ended the matter, but on Monday last, application was renewed by Dolan & Co., and again thirty or forty citizens of the ward and the church people protested. The Commissioners gave no reason to change their minds and refusal followed. The church people were elated at this, but yesterday Mr. Corbin, who resides at 6 Ralph Avenue, told the trustees and pastor that they could not hold another service in the hall. He preferred the rental of a saloon to that of a church. That was his sole reason. A temperance organization also meets in the hall. It expects to go if the saloon comes. As the specific reason for rejection was the presence of the church, the residents in the vicinity anticipate that the saloon will come when it goes. They do not like the thought; they prefer the church. It is the only religious organization within a number of blocks, and the pastor has made it especially worthy by gathering in a large and active Sunday school. He said this morning:

"We have paid our rent promptly and fully, and I do not see how we can be summarily ejected. It is quite true that no lease exists; only payments from month to month. Yet I think our rights as tenants should give us a meeting place for thirty days at least. If legal efforts can save us for that length of time we shall make them. We have bought land for a church site, and of course, will endeavor to build upon it as speedily as possible, but if we are turned out as threatened it will seriously embarrass our society."

When the church vacates, the fight against the saloon is not likely to be abated, for the indignation aroused by the episode will bear heavily on the Commissioner. The people who live in the section say that they are not desirous of adding more saloons to their complement. They claim that they have enough already and add that though the ward is growing rapidly the people who go there are not those who find convenient barrooms a primary essential of existence.

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## THE RIDGEWOOD HALL MATTER

The Ridgewood Hall episode has its humors, some of which have already been pointed out, but it also had its serious side in the consideration of which common sense is entitled to a hearing. There is no doubt about the zeal of the excellent citizens who met Monday night in Trinity Baptist Church, but it is to be feared that they added to it scant measure of knowledge. They met to protest and there is no doubt that they did protest volubly and energetically. One of the speakers said it "should be called an indignation meeting," and certainly there was no lack of warmth in its expressions. It recited by way of a preamble that the store under the hall was to be used as a liquor saloon; that in order to get a license it was "necessary to suppress the brave and persistent opposition of the churches and temperance organizations which occupy the public hall in said building," and that the owner had offered these societies the choice of acquiescing in the license or moving out. The recital is not free from gush. The notion that any bravery is involved in the persistence of the temperance extremists is nonsense. The meeting then resolved that it sympathized with the downtrodden organizations and censured the property owner for turning them out "in mid-winter, homeless." This is mere bathos. Either the Fourth Universalist Church and the Irving Temperance Association are objects of charity or they are not. If they are there is no good reason why their support should be thrown entirely upon the owner of Ridgewood Hall. If they are not such objects it becomes a simple matter of business for them to seek other quarters if they cannot make a satisfactory arrangement where they are. As to the Rev. Conklin and his people a benevolent disposition of their case would be very easy. There is a plenty of orthodox churches, any one of which could turn over its lecture room to the "homeless" society, and the latter would thus secure better accommodation than it now has at a trifling expense. Will any of them do it? Scarcely. Since the orthodox churches cannot stand the contamination of heterodox children in the annual Sunday school parade it is not to be supposed that they would tolerate the soilure [sic] of an orthodox structure by heterodox religious services. But until they are prepared themselves for this act of Christian charity they ought to be ashamed to complain of the inhospitality of the owner of a liquor saloon. The meeting by its resolutions also sympathized with the city, deploring its hapless condition "under the rule of the party in power," which allows taxpayers no influence "as against the rumseller and his friends." The meeting went all over it again in an address to the Mayor and the Excise Commissioners, saying among other things that a license had once been refused on the ground that "the Board would not grant a license to any place below to educate men for hell when up stairs there was a place to educate them for heaven." Is there not a slight incongruity here? The Universalists up stairs do not believe in hell at all. How then can they contend that education for it is going on down stairs or anywhere else?

The high state of rather ridiculous excitement into which the clergy and laymen lashed themselves in Trinity Baptist Church ought to be cooled by the exercise of common sense in the light of facts. The Mayor properly has nothing to do with this

matter. When the Excise Commissioners have determined that a license shall or shall not be granted, that is the end of it—or at least should be the end. That intemperate temperance men think no liquor should be sold at all is not to the purpose. If they can secure prohibition by statute or constitution, very well. They are perfectly free to work for that end. But as the case stands there is no general law against the sale of liquor in Brooklyn. There is no specific law against its sale at the corner of Broadway and Ralph avenue upon compliance with prescribed conditions. Our Trinity Baptist friends should keep clearly before their minds the distinction between what ought to be—or rather what they think ought to be—and what is. No doubt the statement that liquor drinkers and dealers as well as abstainers from liquor have rights will be amazing to our friends at first, but as they reflect, their amazement will disappear.

Now what are the facts? Ridgewood Hall is a place for political and other public meetings, open to all who pay the rent and behave themselves. Men who attend political meetings, whether Republicans, Democrats or Mugwumps—especially if the proceedings are dry—are conscious of a desire to quench their thirst with something other than water. This may be very melancholy, but it is true. There is no law to prevent the quenching process. Tradesmen in wet goods are accustomed to take advantage of the assemblage of men in numbers to supply satisfaction for the customary craving. There is no law against this. In conformity with the conditions of trade, saloons are apt to be opened in or near the buildings where public meetings are held. All this is familiar, but what our friends in Trinity Baptist Church propose to do about it is entirely unfamiliar. Their novel contention is that when a religious or temperance society hires the hall the peculiar facilities provided for the accommodation of other societies must be done away with. If our friends are right they have only to secure a corner in every building wherein liquor is sold in order to enforce practical prohibition. They might go further than this. Why should not they be allowed to stop the sale hard by as well as actually in the building? The simple statement of the case shows its absurdity. As well might the Pilgrim Church people, who met on Sundays in the Academy of Music while their edifice was reconstructing, have asked the Mayor to close on every day all the saloons on Montague street which served the convenience of the attendants at meetings and entertainments in the Academy during the week. The Pilgrims took the building, as any society takes a hall, subject to existing conditions.

The case of the Ridgewood owner as put by himself in a letter printed to-day seems perfectly plain. The Universalists offer him \$156 a year for the use of his property. The liquor dealer offers him \$900. As the owner well says it is "a matter of business." In the opinion of our friends in the Trinity Baptist Church it is bad taste for him to prefer the liquor dealer instead of sacrificing \$744 to the Universalists. But it is sound finance and it is his right.

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