

Ought I to Vote for the Scott Act?

INTRODUCTORY.

A VOTE upon the Canada Temperance Act of 1878 is about to be taken in the County within which I reside. How ought I to vote? I cannot stand idly by—a neutral; there is no room for neutrals in a land which boasts of its civil liberties. The privileges of freedom bear with them commensurate duties and responsibilities. Neglect those duties, evade those responsibilities, and freedom itself will take wing. How then ought I to vote? I am not a teetotalter, though I sympathize with the efforts of those who would, by every proper means, restrain the drinking habits of the people. As a principle, however, I have no faith in legislation as a means of suppressing vice—no more than I have as a means of promoting religion. Still, I have no desire to stand in the way of possible reform.

If it be true that our prisons are filled with miserable beings, four-fifths of whom attribute their fall to Drink, shall I, because I lack faith in prohibitory legislation, stand out openly against it, and place myself in the position of one fighting (to appearance at least) on the side of crime, as against morality and virtue?

These conflicting positions require consideration. I feel that the whole question is one with which I am unfamiliar. One thing is clear: as a citizen, as a parent, as a Christian, I cannot stand idly by and let others decide the matter without my aid. My vote at any rate counts for one; I am bound to cast it, and before I do so I will give the subject careful thought, and when the time comes, will vote irrespective of consequences or appearances on what my conscience may determine to be the right side.

For the time being I quit the subject, and seek change of thought in reading. I have before me *The Popular Science Monthly*. An article on "State Usurpation of Parental Functions," by Sir Auberon Herbert, attracts my attention. I take it up and read:

"Why exert ourselves to enlist the active moral forces of society on our side; to work by sympathy, discussion, advice and teaching of every kind; by personal contact; by that wonderful force of example which makes every better kind of life a magnetic power among the lower kinds; by that softening of character and greater gentleness that diffuse themselves everywhere, as savagery