

General Botha's Difficulties

THE Government of General Botha, who have played a brave part in meeting the war troubles in South Africa, have not smooth sailing at home. There is a considerable element in the country which has little, if any, sympathy with the war. The leader of that kind of opinion is General Hertzog, who is doing his utmost to stir up hostility among the Dutch people. A very striking exhibition of the situation was given recently, when General Botha, seconded by Sir Thomas Smart, leader of the regular Opposition, and supported by a Labor representative, moved a resolution congratulating Sir Douglas Haig and the Allied armies on their gallant service. General Hertzog and his "Nationalist" friends bitterly opposed the resolution. He expressed admiration for the valor of the troops "on both sides," but he went on to say that "it was utterly impossible to sympathize with a fervent prayer for the victory of the armies of England." He described the British Empire as one "built on conquest, and aiming at expansion," and for that reason, he said, he could not commit himself to approve of it. General Botha's resolution was adopted, but it is not pleasant to record that there was a division on it, and that a quarter of the members present voted against it, the vote standing 63 to 21. A dramatic incident at the taking of the vote is described in the Times report:—"Lieut.-Col. Henwood, a Natal member, stepped out into the middle of the floor and called 'The King!'; thereupon the House and galleries, with the exception of the Nationalists, rose and sang 'God Save the King' with enthusiasm." This, we are told, was the first time that the National Anthem had been sung in Parliament, and the scene was a memorable one. South Africa has been slower than Canada in the introduction of the National Anthem into the proceedings of Parliament.—On a number of occasions it has been sung in our Ottawa House, not always under circumstances as justifiable as those which existed in the South African case just cited.

The courageous part taken by General Botha since the beginning of the war, his services both in Parliament and in the field, have received well deserved recognition in all parts of the Empire. His part stands out all the brighter because he has to meet the bitter hostility of General Hertzog and a number of followers, whose influence among the Dutch people of South Africa is a serious menace to the Imperial cause.

Produce!

THE appeal cannot be made too often. The need of greater production of foodstuffs, for home use and for shipment to the Allies, is of the highest importance. The appeals of last year were responded to in a very gratifying manner. The need this year is even greater. Even the most modest efforts in the growing of vegetables are of value, inasmuch as they help to meet home needs and thus leave the market supplies available for others, whose circumstances may not permit them to engage in the cultivation of their plots, and the produce is a substitute for wheat, which is needed for shipment. Individual and co-operative efforts are being made in all directions. Town Councils in some places are offering prizes to the children to encourage

them in gardening work. In one place a patriotic citizen offers to lend moderate sums without interest to those who will apply the money to the purchase of fertilizers. There are many ways in which the good work may be carried on. Let all who can make good use of the seed time now. With the spirit of patriotic production everywhere in the land, the harvest can be made truly great, even where the laborers are few.

In Australia

PREMIER Hughes' troubles in the Parliament of the Australian Commonwealth have been temporarily overcome, and he expects to be free to attend the coming Imperial Conference in London. Mr. Hughes' conscription scheme was defeated on the referendum, and he tendered his resignation to the Governor. Mr. Tudor, the Opposition leader, was unwilling to undertake the formation of a Cabinet unless he could have a dissolution of Parliament, which the Governor did not wish to grant; consequently, Mr. Hughes was re-established in office, but soon afterward one of his measures was beaten in the House. In the latest shuffle, he has taken the position of Labor Minister as well as that of Attorney-General. Four members of the House are taken in as Assistant Ministers, and to conciliate, if possible, the Labor interest, a "Council of Labor" is appointed, including three representatives each of organized capital and labor. For the moment these arrangements are expected to secure the Hughes Cabinet a further tenure of office. Nevertheless, Mr. Hughes will have some reasons for anxiety when he goes away, for in the somewhat disturbed state of public opinion in the Commonwealth, unforeseen events may happen. There seems to be at last a settlement of the conscription question. Compulsory service having been twice defeated by the direct vote of the people, Mr. Hughes and his colleagues bow to the decision and resume their efforts to obtain the men needed by voluntary enlistment, efforts which are now winning more success than they formerly did.

The Irrepressible Alcohol Question

THE field of contention respecting the use of alcohol has been much narrowed lately by the widespread adoption, on this side of the Atlantic, of prohibitory legislation. Many people who in times past have strenuously opposed prohibition, and sought for scientific and medical reasons to support their position, have, under the influence of war conditions, abandoned their ground, and have quietly accepted, if they have not directly approved, the abolition of the liquor traffic. In the parts of Canada which have come under the operation of prohibitory laws, there seems to be a general acknowledgment that the Acts are working well. Though war conditions have had much to do with hastening the enactment of the laws, there is every indication that when the blessed time of peace arrives, the people will not be disposed to go back to the old-time freedom of drinking. On the other side of the ocean, while such a thing as prohibition is

hardly regarded as possible, many restrictions have been adopted. The drinking habit in England is so firmly entrenched that scarcely any reformer looks for total prohibition at any early day. Consequently there is still room for the irrepressible conflict of opinion respecting the usefulness of alcoholic beverages. A suggestion that the beer of England is not pure would demand and receive the gravest consideration as a national problem. In some quarters efforts are made to discriminate carefully between the strong spirits and beer and light wines, though generally the distilling and brewing interests, both very powerful in Great Britain, work hand in hand. In our Canadian treatment of the subject efforts to mark a distinction of this kind have not met with much success. There was a notable debate in the Canadian Senate a few years ago when, in considering amendments to the Scott Act, an eminent medical member made a strenuous effort to secure the passing of a clause allowing the sale of light wines and beer. The movement, fortified though it was by such high medical authority, was strongly opposed, and in the end defeated. The debate brought out a large amount of information on both sides of the then vexed question. To-day much more drastic laws than the Scott Act are accepted in almost all Canada, and, excepting perhaps the representatives of the brewing interest, light wines and beer have no more champions than whiskey. Here nobody troubles himself any more about the question of the value or usefulness of alcohol. In Great Britain, however, the question still engages public attention, and is keenly debated. One of the many committees appointed by the Government to consider the problems of the day has been studying the alcohol question, and has recently made an interim report, through the chairman, Lord D'Abernon. "While recognizing the well nigh universal consumption of alcoholic beverages throughout the world"—Lord D'Abernon does not seem to have appreciated how much that consumption has been restricted on this side of the Atlantic—the committee say there is still a lack of exact knowledge about the effect of it on the human system, and no authentic scientific work gives the required information. The value of alcohol as a food, its effect on the mind, its influence on muscular action and on digestion, respiration, blood circulation and body temperature, its effect on longevity, are all treated and the committee are led to the following conclusions:

- (a) That the main action of alcohol (apart from the effect of its excessive use) is confined to the nervous system.
- (b) That alcohol is narcotic rather than stimulant in its action.
- (c) That its nutritional value is strictly limited.
- (d) That its habitual use as an aid to work is physiologically unsound.
- (e) That the ordinary use of alcohol should not only be moderate, but should be limited to the consumption of beverages of adequate dilution, taken at sufficient intervals of time to prevent a persistent deleterious action on the tissues.

In Canada such a report would probably be regarded as very moderate and too friendly to the liquor habit. For an English report, in the face of the vast extent of the liquor interest and the "well nigh universal consumption of alcoholic beverages," the report is really a strong condemnation of the drinking practice.

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