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TORONTO, FRIDAY, APRIL 18th, 1884.

THE SCOTT ACT AND BUSINESS IN HALTON.

BY REV. D. L. BRETHER.

"Has the Scott Act injured business in the County of Halton?" This is a question which has been often asked lately, and the inquiry will be oftener made in the near future. Many business men outside of Halton are afraid if the Scott Act were to pass in their counties it would either paralyze trade, or drive it out of their towns and villages into counties where liquor could be obtained under tavern licenses. The advocates of liquor are very careful to repeat this declaration over and over again, as if it never had been answered, or were unanswerable. In all places where local option prevails in this country or the United States, the cry has been proved to be false. It is one of the few assertions left to the liquor sellers, which they are in haste, regardless of facts, to terrify business men with. But, like every argument they use, and assertion they make, on examination it proves to be empty and false. No one knows better than these men who use it, the worthlessness of all such assertions. As Halton is the only county in this province where this law is in force, business men everywhere are looking to it for an answer. I will try and supply this answer from evidence of the best and most reliable kind.

But first let us look at the claim this licensed liquor traffic makes when it declares so imperiously that it helps the legitimate industries of our country.

The amount of business done in any community is determined by

two things. FIRST, By the necessities of the people forming that community, and, SECONDLY, By the amount of money they earn, which will represent their purchasing power.

If a very limited quantity of goods is purchased, either the necessities of the people have been lessened, or their purchasing power has been interfered with. Anything that interferes with the money earning power of the workers, that diminishes or wastes the wages earned, must be a loss to the whole community. Every member of society is just to that extent the poorer. For example, here is a town of 2,500 people. The number of wage-earners will be about say 500. All the money brought into each family treasury per day is just the amount each worker in that family earns. A large per cent. of each day's wages must go for bread, meat, groceries, shoes, clothing, books, &c., and what balance is over will be laid away against "a rainy day." Suppose

A Grog SHOP

is opened in that town, and the trade in whisky selling prospers. Any one can see that the liquor business thrives just in proportion as the working men spend their money in the bar room. The amount of money spent for liquor so far lessens the ability of the family from whose little store the money is taken, to purchase home supplies. Or, if it is not taken from the sum necessary to keep the house, it must utterly destroy the small surplus which was laid away against a time of sickness. We know that not only the surplus of wages is destroyed, but also in many cases almost all the money earned, and in some cases all, will go for drink. What can follow in such instances but a lessening of the wage-earners' ability to make money, and a partial or complete destruction of the means wherewith to purchase goods. The last step then is to tax the sober, industrious citizens to supply the needs of the destitute, and to help build poorhouses for the wives and children, and jails for too many of the husbands and sons made criminals by the use of liquor. Who cannot see that the saloon, both directly and indirectly, injures the shoemaker, grocer, dry goods merchant, clothier, milliner and book dealer, &c., &c.? It is an ulcer on the body politic—which must be destroyed or the body will die a vampire sucking the life blood of society and remaining a vampire forever. The liquor traffic is an enemy of every business and trade in the nation, and every business man and mechanic should, in self-defence, if from no higher motive, destroy the accursed thing. If business has been destroyed in Halton it is not because the necessities of the people are less now than under license. Nor is it because there are fewer workers in the field, store, shop, or factory than at other times. Nor because there has been a great exodus of people from the county since the Scott Act came into operation. The people certainly eat as much bread and meat, drink as much tea and coffee, use as much groceries, wear as much clothing, boots and shoes, and read as many books and papers as in anti-prohibition days. Nor is it because our farmers and mechanics have less work than at other times. No factory has closed its doors and dismissed its workers. No farmer has ceased to produce because there has not been a market for its products. No employer of labor says his men are more idle and drunken than in former times, but many say they are more sober and industrious and regular at work than in other days.

If these things are so, "How then has business failed in Halton?" How is it that Anti-Scott Act men say the towns and villages are ruined