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WHY I AM OPPOSED TO TOTAL PROHIBITION

(Continued from page 14)

They feared that the soldiers, being engaged in a fight for freedom, might consider this a small sector of the struggle and vote against the measure. They wanted to plant prohibition on the sly and give it three years to take root. They were right in fearing that the soldiers would vote against it. They inferred it from the fact that the soldiers stoned a prohibition parade at the time the bill was before the Legislature. Two years later they were quite certain—the British Columbia soldiers at the Front, being given a chance to vote on a prohibition plebiscite, defeated it by a thumping majority.

Thus, taking Ontario as an example, we see that Moral Reform, in achieving its prohibition goal, has disregarded most of the moral considerations which actuate ordinary citizens. Not to put too fine a point on it they lie and break promises and do other contemptible things. Leader Rowell and his wing of the Liberal party broke a promise when they went on with the abolish-the-bar agitation after a general election had given it a slap in the face. The Hearst Government obtained money under false pretences when it took a campaign fund from the liquor men and then sold them out to their enemies. I suppose they call this fighting the devil with fire. All I can say is that there is mighty little honour in it.

To cap the climax both the perjured parties in Ontario now get together to put across another imposture on a dumb, driven people. Having broken their promise to drop Prohibition if a general election was adverse, having broken their promise to the liquor men to treat them fairly in return for campaign contributions, the moral reformers on both sides of politics now join hands to break another promise to the moderate drinker who was told, that, if he helped with his good will, Prohibition for Ontario would be passed as a war measure and would go no further. Well, the moderate drinker did help with his good will, as requested, and now they throw him down. Strange ethics these! Not two wrongs only—but three wrongs to make a right.

The Ontario moral reformers, not content with a law which puts respectable hotels out of business, incommodates the travelling public, drives conventions away from our big cities, injures business, and makes the place look foolish with its silly regulation against giving a friend a drink; not content with this, I repeat they now burn with a desire to extend the area of restriction until it is coterminous with the Dominion of Canada. They would march, as they announce, from victory unto victory. That is to say, they would steal a march on some four hundred thousand soldier-voters who are absent from our midst. In this march of victory the moral reformers would trample ordinary decencies, like truth and one's pledged word, under foot. Dominion-wide Prohibition is to be won, as I see it, by a series of dirty tricks—which prompts me to ask right here "Which is the greater sin—to lie and break faith or to take a little drink with St. Timothy for the stomach's sake?" All those who favour St. Timothy say, "Aye." The Ayes have it.

Dominion-wide Prohibition won by these methods would be the final triumph of falsehood and tergiversation. Outside of that there are practical considerations. Who will make up the twenty-five million dollars in revenue which Canada would lose if the manufacture and importation were stopped? Will the moral reformers, some of them millionaires, foot the deficit? I trow not. We shall need, at least, three hundred million dollars a year after

the War to run Canada. Will the Dominion-wide Prohibitionists make up the loss their little hobby occasions? I trow not. Will they, perchance, avow a horror of confiscation and pay for the property they want the State to steal? I trow not three times. Will they even come forward with a scheme of hotel accommodation as good as the one they throw out? Consider me as throwing not again.

I have several other objections to Dominion-wide Prohibition which are objections to prohibition in general, my chief reason being that prohibition prohibits. We are involved at present in a world struggle for freedom. What a traitor I would be to the cause if I meekly surrendered my individual liberty! I consider that the noisy minority which calls itself Moral Reform has as little right to tell me what I shall not drink as it has to forbid me to eat trip on Tuesday or to stay away from church on Sunday. Because I do not drink myself is no reason why I should ask others to stop drinking. Though I turn virtuous the world may still have its cakes and ale. These are old arguments I know, but Armageddon gives them a new appeal.

Moreover, Prohibition does not do what it promises. It does not develop character by removing temptation from the path any more than it helps Baby to walk to put the stumbling blocks out of his way. It does not encourage truth—on the contrary, it encourages cant and humbug—when it says, as it does in Ontario, you can't drink in public but you can have all you like in your own cellar. I know several good church members who never had more than two bottles in the house before September, 16th, 1916, who never think now of sending to Montreal for less than two cases.

This would go to show that Prohibition does not encourage sobriety. It doesn't. I have it on good authority that in Toronto alone there are eight thousand persons engaged in the illicit sale of liquor. All Prohibition has done in Toronto has been to deprive the city of the license fees and make the liquor poisonous. Of course, it is the hard stuff that is sold, and deadly hard it is. Only the other day three men in Toronto died of drinking an alleged wine, heavily doctored with wood alcohol. If this sort of prohibition becomes Dominion-wide, I shudder to think what strange vices people may invent as substitutes for what is now a natural appetite.

Much has been made of the "economic waste" in liquor. Most of us assented to Prohibition as a war measure on that very ground. If space served, I could show that nature is full of waste, the scent of flowers, the song of birds, the changing glories of the clouds, which answer no useful purpose but which make life gladder all the same. I would only like to point out that if Canada passes Prohibition she will be the only belligerent country to do so.

None of the great Overseas Dominions of the British Empire has gone in for total prohibition. England has not abolished strong drink, though she has cut the output in two and halved the alcoholic content. She has not even abolished the bar, only curtailed the hours. It is greatly to her credit that she has not been swept off her feet by the cranks, but she has kept the even tenor of her way and—her beer. France still drinks her wines and brandies. All France did was to take advantage of the War to abolish absinthe—which is not a drink, but a gut-rotting drug. Russia got rid of vodka—which is about the same as if Canada got rid of potato-peeling whiskey—but the new democracy will still have a large range of liquors to choose from.

WHY I AM IN FAVOUR OF TOTAL PROHIBITION

(Continued from page 14)

one of a company of entertainers who went to France to give good, clean, wholesome entertainment to the boys at the Front through the Young Men's Christian Association, told us in Toronto a few weeks ago, that when you go out to tea in England now, if you desire it, as it is short rations there, and families are limited in purchasing it.

And still again, there are the accidents in factories and machine shops due to drink. Billy Sunday's campaigns are teaching employers of labour this lesson in a very practical way. The vice-president of a great Iron Works concern in the United States said that his company could have afforded to pay its employees a quarter of a million dollars more than their wages during the period that Mr. Sunday was working among them, because of the increased efficiency of the men—there were fewer accidents because the men were sober and, therefore, steadier. Billy Sunday had them all on the water wagon. Their employers say they know now that the majority of the accidents in factories are due to drink; they know now that until the booze is prohibited, they can never have really efficient workmen. Lord Kitchener found this out also

in the time lost through drink in the munition factories of England and the shipbuilding yards of the Clyde. No wonder Lloyd George pronounced Drink a greater enemy than Germany or Austria.

But however we may tolerate this waste of men and money and resources in times of peace, it is criminal and unpatriotic in times like the present, when the world's food supply is at an alarmingly low ebb, and Canada's granary should be carefully guarded for the Empire's need.

Is Canada doing her duty in wasting those 3,071,443 bushels of grain when Belgium is starving and the shortage of food is world-wide? Is Canada doing her duty, when her soldiers in the hospitals and trenches are calling in vain for sugar in their tea and coffee, to put 14,884,560 pounds of molasses in beer and liquors? Eight of her provinces have declared for Prohibition, and over two-thirds of the ninth is under local option, and is it not clearly her duty to encourage these eight provinces and conserve her foodstuffs by prohibiting the manufacture of this, her greatest enemy, as well as the importation of it, for beverage purposes?

But some will tell us that our Dominion Gov-