

Contributed Articles.

THE QUESTION OF PROHIBITION.

THE W. C. T. U. AND THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT.

To the Editor of THE CANADA CITIZEN.

DEAR SIR,—In a recent number of your very valuable paper Mrs. Curzon makes some very trenchant criticisms with regard to the W. C. T. U., and its attitude towards the Woman Suffrage movement, and as a member of the W. C. T. U., and at the same time directly interested in the movement for the political equality of woman, it is just possible I may be able to rectify some mistakes and facts that Mrs. Curzon has inadvertently fallen into with regard to the W. C. T. U. and its honored President; and as I am intimately associated with both suffragists and W. C. T. U. workers, I can speak with authority as to the attitude of the N. W. C. T. U. and the Canadian wing of this great army of philanthropic workers.

1st. Mrs. Curzon says the reason why the Ont. W. C. T. U. looks askance in the suffrage question is because the W. C. T. U. of the United States, led by Frances Willard, thought it best to keep their work free from the woman suffragists. Now, for the benefit of all W. S. and all W. C. T. U. workers, I wish to say that Frances Willard is and ALWAYS has been a suffragist, as are all of the leading women of the National W. C. T. U. of the United States. It was Frances Willard who, at the Baltimore Convention of the N. W. C. T. U. some years ago, proved her faith by her works by introducing a suffrage resolution committing the National Organization to the principles of suffrage. It was Mrs. Annie Wittenmeyer then president, who opposed it, and on this question of woman's ballot more than all else Frances E. Willard was elected to the presidency of the W. C. T. U., and has ever since held that office. The National Organization of the W. C. T. U. is so much committed to the principles of Woman Suffrage that a franchise department of work has been in existence for a length of time. This department is under the charge of Mrs. Wallace, of Indiana, a member of the National Suffrage Association. A woman who, through a long career of usefulness, has made the world rich by her inward light, and outward righteousness. Many State W. C. T. U. are committed to the suffrage movement, and to this end have petitioned their respective legislatures. Just now Ill. W. C. T. U. is again before her General Assembly asking for a constitutional amendment to the State Constitution, extending the elective franchise to women. At the same time the great national body representing the women of 100,000 homes and firesides has through their Supt. of Franchise petitioned the United States Congress in this wise: "that since all injustice works a list—prayeth that the United States Congress will run on the political disabilities of women by submitting a sixteenth amendment to the National Constitution prohibiting the disenfranchisement of any citizen on the ground of sex." It cannot but be evident from the above that Frances Willard, as the leader of the W. C. T. U. of the United States, is with that great body committed to the principles that Mrs. Curzon so eloquently pleads for. As for the Canada W. C. T. U., the truth is they as a body do not follow in the wake of the National President, but fall a long way in the rear from the progressive advances of that gracious woman and leader, Frances E. Willard. Individually many of the Ont. W. C. T. U. workers are committed to the principles and justice of the claims of the suffrage movement; and I speak with knowledge when I say that the great body of our workers would hail with gladness the Parliamentary franchise as beneficial to them and to the Temperance Reform. And it is only a matter of time when this great compendium of modern civilization—the ballot—will be in the hands of our women as a weapon against the political intriguing saloon system of to-day. Until then let us both work on in a common unity, remembering "that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," and all humanity be blessed. To this end we want—"more prayer; more knowledge; more faith; more labor; more patience; more perseverance; more money; more women."

"We have no time to waste
In critic's sneer, or cynic's bark,
Quarrel or reprimand;
T'will soon be dark;
Then choose thine aim,
And may God speed the mark."

MINNIE PHELPS,
Supt. Press Dept. Ont. W. C. T. U.

The question of Prohibition is before the people of our country. It is to be expected that the religious press shall keep the question prominent until it finds a satisfactory settlement. Intemperance is an evil which Christian principle compels us to oppose always, earnestly, and by all proper means.

The plea that to prohibit the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors within the limits of a State, is to establish sumptuary laws, which are unconstitutional, is a sophistry with which the most artful demagogue will hardly be able to deceive the most ignorant voter. The State has a right to regulate trade within its bounds and to determine what trades and manufactures it will or will not license.

The question of the constitutional right of Prohibition is settled in the minds of the people. The only question remaining is the expediency of such legislation.

In respect even to this question of expediency, the only point open to debate in the minds of Christian men is that of method. As to principles, every good man must confess that intemperance is a great evil, the greatest that now casts its shadow over our land. The cry comes up against it from our prisons, four-fifths of whose inmates have been made criminals by strong drink; from thousands of homes, where helpless women and children suffer and weep for ruined husbands and fathers, from honorable parents whose cultured and gifted sons have taken the prodigal's path. Opposition to such an evil is not a question of expediency but of principle and of personal integrity. We must oppose this evil; we must labor and pray for its removal.

The question of method in promoting the cause of temperance is now pressed forward by the people.

Has prohibitory law proven a remedy for the evil? Let the State of Maine be called as the first witness. The State of Maine led off more than twenty years ago in prohibiting by the vote of her people the sale of intoxicating liquors. Did Maine find the effort at Prohibition a failure? While it has rested with the people to preserve the prohibitory laws, and they were free from year to year, if they found them not worth the trouble of sustaining, to give judgment against them in their elections, the sentiment in their favor has steadily strengthened, and at her last election, having tried Prohibition for twenty years, she incorporated it as an amendment to her constitution by a majority of seventy thousand votes, while the dominant political party gave to their ticket only about sixteen thousand majority. Such is the testimony of Maine after long experience.

Kansas has already reduced the amount of intoxicating liquors sold in her territory more than one-half by her prohibitory amendment. The evil of intemperance is disappearing under the new regime as fast as the most ardent friends of Prohibition had hoped.

In Arkansas local option has been enforced until the amount of whiskey consumed in that State to-day as compared with five years ago is as the jug-full to the barrel.

There are those who tell us that Prohibition does not prohibit. It is said that in almost every town and village of Maine whiskey may be gotten somewhere. Who are they that get it and how do they get it? A man who is willing to get it anywhere and anyhow, drinks from a jug which has been buried in the mud in a pig-sty, and then says triumphantly, "I can get whiskey in the State of Maine; Prohibition does not prohibit." We do not expect to make any laws which will keep men of that class from drinking. But the Prohibition of constitutional law and the protest of seventy thousand majority of Maine's worthy citizens will be Prohibition enough for decent men. It were as reasonable to pronounce all laws against theft useless because they cannot wholly prevent stealing as to pronounce against Prohibition because it does not wholly prevent drunkenness.

Who are they that oppose prohibitory laws? The saloon keepers, and brewers, and distillers. They are fully aroused; they are leagued to oppose the movement with all the money and influence which they can command. There is no class of men who watch with such deep interest the progress of Prohibition as these, there are none that keep better informed of its effects, and they resist it with their utmost power, giving in their organized opposition to it, the best testimony as to its efficiency.—*Southwestern Methodist*.