

A ROUSING BATTLE-CRY.

Temperance and Prohibition.

To the members and adherents of the Methodist Church in the Province of Ontario

DEAR BRETHREN AND FRIENDS.—The General Conference of the Methodist Church, in session assembled in the city of Toronto, in September, 1886, appointed a permanent committee on Temperance, dividing it, for convenience of meeting, into three sections, viz., Ontario, Quebec, and the Eastern Provinces.

Since the meeting of the General Conference a new House of Commons has been elected for the Dominion. During the first session of the new Parliament Mr. Jamieson's resolution in favor of the total prohibition of the liquor traffic was submitted and defeated by a majority of 12, the vote being 70 for and 112 against the resolution.

A general effort to repeal the Canada Temperance Act in the cities and counties in this Province where it is now in force has been begun, and to give this movement greater force a reign of lawlessness and violence has been inaugurated, and to all appearance has become the settled policy of this unholy traffic.

For these and other reasons, a meeting of the Ontario section of the committee was convened by the Rev. John A. Williams, D. D., General Superintendent, on the 12th day of September, 1887, when, after a careful consideration of the present aspect of the temperance question, it was decided to call the prayerful attention of the Methodist people of this Province to the emphatic utterance of the General Conference on this subject, and its application to the present situation.

ENFORCEMENT OF SCOTT ACT

The Scott Act is in force in twenty-five counties and two cities in Ontario, and in the whole Dominion the law has been adopted in sixty-three counties and cities. The net majority of the votes for the Act thus far in all the contests is 19,955. It is now more than eight years since it was first voted upon and adopted, and no county or city has yet rejected it, although repeated efforts have been made to do so. We regard it of great moment that our people give due attention to the proper enforcement of this law. We would urge that everywhere they stand by the officers appointed to that work, and assist them in every lawful way.

The adoption of the Act has taught us several valuable lessons which we do well to profit by:—

- 1. We have learned that the abolition of the license system has not been followed by commercial disaster as the liquor advocates everywhere declared it would be.
2. That municipal government may be carried on without the local revenue derived from the licensing of intoxicating liquors, and that without the imposition of new and burdensome taxes upon the people.
3. That the law has proved a valuable educator of public opinion.
4. That wherever the law is even moderately well enforced the mischievous and wicked treating customs are largely destroyed.
5. That the consumption of intoxicants is decreasing in our Dominion in a degree corresponding with the extent to which the Act is adopted.
6. That the reduction of poverty, drunkenness and crime is more and more manifest. And,
7. That our hope of ultimate and complete victory over this great enemy of all righteousness lies in total prohibition. We must not stop short of this. We cannot, if we would conserve what we have already secured.

That these advantages as well as others may have the fullest effect, let us oppose with all our might of work, prayer, faith and vote the repeal of the Act whenever and wherever an attempt is made in that direction. Let the name of no member of the Methodist Church be found upon a repeal petition, much less, let no one cooperate directly or indirectly with those who seek to re-dress with the garment of respectability and legality a traffic which the Act has made disreputable and illegal. Utterly refuse to have any partnership with a business whose policy is that of the anarchists in the use of the dynamite bomb, violence and terrorism. Let it be known to all that a vote to repeal the Act is a vote against prohibition, and every vote to sustain the Act is a vote for prohibition. Then, in the fear of God, let us endeavor to defeat the repeal agitation all along the line and prohibition will soon be gained.

ADOPT THE ACT IN OTHER COUNTIES.

There are still twenty counties and cities in Ontario which have not yet adopted the Scott Act.

We would urge our people to take, in conjunction with others, such steps as shall at once bring in a vote for its adoption and use all righteous means to secure that end.

POLITICAL ELECTIONS.

It is matter for devout thankfulness and congratulation that the recent attempts in our Dominion Parliament to repeal the Scott Act and destroy its worth, were utterly defeated, nevertheless we must not close our eyes to the fact that the same parliament which sustained the Scott Act voted down the prohibition by a majority of 12. With a House of Commons that contains 112 friends of the liquor traffic, as recently proclaimed by their recorded votes against a prohibitory law, it is obvious that the temperance reform has some hard battles to fight before the rum traffic is brought to an end in our Dominion.

The present situation defines the duties of all Christian electors in an unequivocal terms. We would not ignore, or in any way depreciate, the value of the subordinate forces in the struggle for deliverance from a great national bane. We rejoice in the power of moral suasion, in the good work wrought by the numerous temperance organizations of our land, in the influence of the religious and political press that is ever becoming more potent for prohibitory legislation. Still it is evident, even to the superficial observer, that the mightiest weapon in this conflict is the ballot, and that the great decisive battles of the temperance movement must be fought at the polls. The issue is fairly before the country now. The attitude and personal of our enemies were never so clearly defined. The temperance men of Canada have the opportunity of striking a blow for the complete and final suppression of the liquor traffic such as they never had before. May they prove equal to the duties and responsibilities of the hour!

We do not hesitate to say that the temperance question is the great question before the country to-day, and so vast is its importance that all lovers of their imperilled fellow-men, all advocates of social and moral reform should for the time being hold in abeyance partisan politics, and so use their vote and influence in all coming elections to the Dominion Parliament that not a solitary man who has declared himself an enemy to prohibition shall be permitted to resume his seat in our legislative halls. The temperance electors of this country have it in their power to render the re-election of these men impossible if they will but consent to sink minor differences, and unite all their forces on the broad platform of this great moral and political reform.

Permit us to call your prayerful attention to the valuable report of the Committee on Temperance, which was adopted by a hearty and unanimous vote of our late General Conference, and especially to the following extract from it

"The ballot must execute the will of a free people and must not be cast for that which is a sin against God and a crime against humanity. The time has come to draw the line between those who stand with the saloon and against the people and those who stand with the people and against the saloon. We, therefore, recommend that our people in all municipal and parliamentary elections vote only for candidates who, in addition to other necessary qualifications, are known and professed prohibitionists, and we heartily pledge ourselves to co-operate with the Dominion Alliance and all temperance organizations in their efforts to educate the electors of the Dominion on the necessity of prohibitory legislation.

"We cannot admit the statement of often made by those having little or no sympathy with prohibition that the country is not yet ready for a prohibitory law, on the contrary, we are convinced that the country by adopting the Scott Act showed it was ready for such legislation. We believe the wide growth of public sentiment in favor of prohibition renders it the duty of our Parliament to pass a prohibitory law that will brand the traffic with public condemnation."

We would respectfully recommend each Quarter Board to consider the subject matter of this address and press such resolutions as may commend themselves to their godly judgment, and submit the result of their deliberations to an early meeting of each congregation on the circuit that a full expression of opinion on this most important question may be secured from all our people. It is also requested that copies of such resolutions as may be passed shall be sent to the secretary of the Permanent Committee on Temperance—Rev. D. L. Brethour, Brantford, Ont.

JOHN A. WILLIAMS, Chairman. E. L. BRETHOUR, Secretary. Toronto, October, 1887.

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