

The Camp Fire.

A MONTHLY JOURNAL
OF TEMPERANCE PROGRESS.

SPECIALLY DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF
THE PROHIBITION CAUSE.

Edited by F. S. SPENCE

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NOTE.—It is proposed to make this the cheapest Temperance paper in the world, taking into consideration its size, the matter it contains and the price at which it is published.

Every friend of temperance is earnestly requested to assist in this effort by subscribing and by sending in facts or arguments that might be of interest or use to our workers.

The editor will be thankful for correspondence upon any topic connected with the temperance reform. Our limited space will compel condensation. No letter for publication should contain more than two hundred words—if shorter, still better.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER, 1899

THE FORM OF THE PLEDGE.

The form of electoral pledge adopted by the Dominion Alliance to be used in the 100,000 voters campaign, is as follows:

We, the undersigned, promise that at the next general election for the Dominion Parliament, we will vote only for such candidates as will agree to do all in their power, if elected, to obtain the immediate enactment of such legislation as will secure the total prohibition of the liquor traffic in AT LEAST those provinces and territories that gave majorities for prohibition in the plebiscite.

This pledge to be null and void unless 25,000 signatures to it is secured.

Some objection has been taken to this pledge on the ground that the signing of it will practically disfranchise electors in those constituencies in which none of the nominated candidates is favorable to the temperance cause.

This will be the case. Herein lies one of the most valuable features of the movement. The greatest political difficulty that prohibitionists have to cope with is the difficulty of securing the nomination of the right kind of men. If the pledge were in any other form, if it were so framed as to allow electors to vote under all circumstances, it would be comparatively valueless. Both parties would simply nominate liquor-favoring candidates, knowing that as the result of this course the prohibition question would be eliminated from the contest.

If the managers of a party know that the nomination of a liquor-favoring candidate will lose them material and needed support they will hesitate about making such a nomination. The pledge movement, if rightly worked, will be immensely valuable in its influence upon nominations.

Moreover, pledged electors, anxious to avoid being disfranchised as suggested, will make an effort to secure the nomination of candidates of the right kind. To enable them to vote, they must in some few cases nominate independent candidates.

The object of the pledge is not to keep men from voting, but to have their votes count for prohibition. Unless there is in the field a candidate favorable to prohibition, the pledged voters must take such wise action as will secure for them an opportunity to be counted on the right side of this question. No less binding form of pledge would accomplish this result.

THE LIBERAL PARTY.

There can be no justification of the unfair treatment which the Dominion Government representing the Liberal party, has meted out to the prohibitionists of Canada.

It must be borne in mind that the prohibition plebiscite was not promised by the Liberal party simply as a method of testing, from an independent standpoint, the strength of public opinion regarding prohibition.

The speeches made in connection with the plebiscite promise assumed, and the people were led to believe, that the Liberal party desired to help the temperance cause, and was ready to enact a prohibitory law if only evidence could be secured that the public opinion favored such action. Liberal leaders distinctly and definitely claimed that their party was more friendly to the temperance cause than was the Conservative party.

The Liberal party won in the last general election on this policy, and with this understanding. Thousands of temperance men believed that if a plebiscite were taken it would show a majority for prohibition, and accepted the plebiscite promise in the belief that it thus opened the way to what they desired. For this reason many of them, who had been Conservatives, renounced their former party allegiance, and supported Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

When the Plebiscite was granted, some critics of the Liberal Government and party, declared that its results would not be fairly dealt with. The temperance men who had faith in the Liberal party, repudiated what they termed a slander. They expressed their confidence that the Government which had taken the supposed step in advance, would stand by its own action. They avowed their faith in the people as to the vote, and in the Government as to the result. When the vote was taken they still looked to the Government to honorably carry out the implied contract.

The result has been a bitter disappointment. Many earnest temperance men feel themselves doubly fooled. They were misled into supporting the Liberal party believing that that party was ready to help the temperance cause. They were misled into working hard in the plebiscite campaign believing that the victory they thus won would redound to the benefit of the cause for which they were willing to sacrifice much.

They began to see their mistake when Cabinet Ministers went out campaigning against the reform which the Government was supposed to favor, and when in many places the machinery of the Liberal party's organization was used in the interests of the liquor traffic. Still they had faith in Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the English-speaking Liberals. All their hopes were dashed to the ground when they were coldly told that they had not polled enough votes to warrant a fulfillment of their expectation, and the Liberal leaders dropped the role of friends of prohibition, without even expressing regret that they did not see their way clear to fulfil the hopes which they had raised, and by which they had benefitted.

No doubt there are many members of the Liberal party who are friendly to the temperance cause. It may even be true that the liquor traffic has so far been mainly opposed to the Liberal party. Nothing can alter the disheartening fact that the Liberal leaders used the temperance sentiment of the best class of the Canadian electorate as a means of obtaining power, and now treat that sentiment with contemptuous indifference giving unjust preference to the wishes of the liquor-favoring minority.

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY.

The Conservative party in Dominion politics has no record of special effort to help the temperance cause. It has however, up to the present no record of any attempt to use the prohibition sentiment of the community for partisan purposes.

Conservatives freely denounced the plebiscite policy of the Liberals as a scheme to hoodwink prohibitionists and secure their votes. They have now an opportunity to declare that their predictions were right, that the temperance people were duped. They are making good use of the opportunity.

Conservative leaders are busy strongly denouncing the failure of the Liberals to deal justly with the prohibition question, and are calling upon prohibitionists to resent and punish that injustice by putting the Liberals out of power.

As matters stand to-day the Liberal party in Dominion politics has no claim upon the support of those who favor prohibition. Their conduct has merited the punishment which the Conservatives invite us to assist in inflicting.

Unfortunately there is at present no prospect that we can in any way promote prohibition legislation by taking this course. The Conservatives ask us to help them to power, but they do not propose to do anything for our cause when their object has been secured. It is true that they are not holding out any hopes that are likely to mislead us. It is equally true that we are not likely to gain any by a change of Government, unless we would strengthen our position, as some people say we would, by "teaching the Liberals a lesson."

Although the Conservative party is not committed to the enactment of prohibitory legislation by any professions of favor for the temperance cause, or any promise to be guided in its action by the plebiscite, that party is, equally with the Liberal party, in duty bound to deal with the temperance question on its merits, and prohibitionists ask no more than this.

The recognized evils that inevitably follow the liquor traffic, the rightness of the policy of prohibition, the duty of governments to promote the public welfare, the favor of the people for the proposed reform, the results of the Provincial and Dominion prohibition plebiscites, are all facts that ought to have equal weight with statesmen of both political parties. If the Conservative leaders will accept the responsibility of the duty which the Liberal leaders have evaded, if they will undertake to do what the men now in office ought to have done, if they will give the public any reason at all to believe that their advent to power will in any way promote the temperance cause, then it will be the duty of prohibitionists to do all they can to secure the triumph of the Conservative party.

Prohibition-favoring Conservatives, at last election, left their party and supported Sir Wilfrid Laurier, not simply because their party deserved punishment for its failure to promote temperance legislation, but because they hoped by the sacrifice they made to help the prohibition cause. It may be true that temperance Liberals have now more reason for dissatisfaction with their party leaders than Conservative prohibitionists had in 1896. They have however, no other inducement to change their party. Voting Conservative only means punishing the Liberals, not helping the temperance cause.

WHAT THEN?

The temperance cause will not be abandoned. The prohibition fight will go on. The two hundred and seventy-

eight thousand men who voted prohibition in September last, will not give up their fight simply because party politicians do not favor the reform for which the people voted.

Members of Parliament have a right to their own opinions. They must consult their consciences as well as their constituents. To secure full and honest representation of public opinion in Parliament it is therefore necessary that the conscientious conviction of the representative shall coincide with the public opinion of the constituency. Responsibility for the securing of this condition rests upon the constituents.

The plebiscite has made it clear that the prohibition electors far outnumber their opponents is a great majority of constituencies. If these electors will adopt the simple plan of supporting only such parliamentary candidates as are also prohibitionists, the conscientious convictions of a great majority of representatives in the next Parliament will be in harmony with the public opinion that the plebiscite expressed.

A majority of conscientious prohibitionists in Parliament will speedily compel the enactment of a prohibitory law whether party leaders do or do not favor such enactment.

The prohibitionists have deliberately resolved upon this policy. By it and only by it they can win. It will involve for many the sacrifice of party and personal preferences. It will involve the nomination and support of independent candidates in some electorate districts. It will involve in some cases, voting for Conservatives by men who are Liberals, and in others, voting for Liberals by men who are Conservatives.

We need not leave our political parties unless the political parties drive us out. We are with them if they respect the voice of the people and nominate candidates who will do their utmost if elected, to have public opinion embodied in legislation. It is our duty to work harder than we ever worked to secure the election of such candidates.

On the other hand it is equally the duty of loyal prohibitionists to do all in their power to prevent the nomination, and to secure the defeat if nominated, of every candidate who will not agree, if elected, to do all he can to oppose in every legitimate way, the Government's hostile, do-nothing policy in relation to the temperance question.

A GREAT BOOK.

During the year of the Ontario Provincial Plebiscite there was published a magazine entitled THE VANGUARD, filled from month to month with the best obtainable statistics and other statements relating to the liquor question and the prohibition movements, and forcible arguments prepared by the best posted writers on the subject named.

Eleven numbers were issued. They were bound together and carefully indexed making a splendid magazine of material for speakers and workers. A few copies are still left and will be sold to the first applicants for FIFTY CENTS each.

This volume of the Vanguard contains 680 pages. It is well bound in neat cloth boards, and is fairly packed full of just the kind of information that prohibition advocates desire to possess. Its articles discuss every phase of the temperance question, and are accurate and reliable. Only a few persons can be supplied. First come, first served.

Address.

52 Confederation Life Building,
Toronto.