

PRACTICAL WORKING OF THE
SCOTT ACT.

AT the Prohibition Convention held at Toronto last week, reports were presented from the counties in which the Scott Act is in force, showing its results. Those who presented these reports were and are on their own confession, "fanatical" promoters of this Act. We may be quite sure that they not merely made their reports as favourable as facts would admit, but that there was a very strong bias towards such a representation as would be acceptable to a Prohibition Convention. The Chairman said frankly they were "fanatics." They cannot therefore expect us, who are in our sober senses, to accept their statements as wholly trustworthy. But we will give their reports as they were presented, upon which our readers can form their own judgments.

Several delegates stated that "the whole volume of drinking had been reduced by the Scott Act." This is quite possible, and at the same time there may have been, and we know by most credible testimony that in some counties there was, an increase of excessive drinking owing to the Act. That the Act had checked treating, was declared very positively. But at the same time it was admitted that drinking in private rooms, sly drinking, drinking in so-called "Clubs," had become a new danger which we believe to be even worse than treating. One delegate honestly admitted that the Act was an utter failure. Others declared that in spite of the Act "men in hotels asked for 'nothing' and got it, and it i.e. 'nothing' made them drunk." Others said that "the Act led to a very great deal of false swearing," which is worse than drunkenness as more likely to become a general habit. Others said that "men went across the border and came home drunk." Others that the law was "treated with utter contempt by the public." Others that "there was difficulty in getting people to act as spies on their neighbours." For this we are indeed thankful. The development of a spy system amongst neighbours who should live together in peace and good will would produce a state of social anarchy bordering upon civil war. We thank God earnestly, that our Countrymen are not so base as to act as spies on each other's social habits. We hope that the most condign punishment will be inflicted on any person or persons caught practicing the vile offense against social liberty and decency. Others reported that the magistrates dare not carry out the Act because of threats to burn their barns if they did so! Others said that the places of worship where Scott Act sermons were preached were in danger of being burned or wrecked.

The law is thus made a provoker of crime, as all law must be which is the mere expression of fanatical prejudices, and not as all law having a moral aspect should be, the embodiment of, and drawing its real strength from agreement with the general conscience.

From the reports of Scott Act advocates we get these as the results of this legislation. 1st. A fearful outbreak of lying and perjury. 2nd. Wholesale defiance of the law by the classes

usually most rigid observers of the law. 3rd. A systematic effort made to establish an odious, disgusting, demoralizing spy system amongst neighbours, than which nothing could be more supremely, more villainously base. 4th. A new and terrible form of crime established in Canada—that is the terrorising of the Magistracy by threats of vengeance if they carry out the law. 5th. The demoralisation of the magistrates by this fear of their neighbour's vengeance. 6th. The demoralisation of the whole community by the sight of statute law being openly defied. 7th. The establishment by youths and young men of private drinking clubs. These clubs are so utterly abominable in their very object, and so certain to produce infamous consequences, that we regard this new danger to morality and religion as in itself the most damning evidence possible of the evils of the Scott Act. It seeks to drive out Beelzebub by invoking legions of devils. We have had experience of drinking clubs. We warn our clergy and all friends of decency, that one such place will do more to propagate drunkenness and licentiousness than a score of saloons which are under legal rule. Youths and young men who would be ashamed to enter a saloon will go to such a Club and learn habits of debauchery which are the ruin of body and soul. For such a result the Christian public are besought to become fanatically anxious!

For what purpose is this flood of crime, vice, and social disorder brought upon the country? Simply this, to prevent men by force of law temperately using a beverage because a small percentage of the baser sort abuse it?

Society governed on Scott Act principles would produce curious results. We should all wear gags in our mouths because fools misuse their tongues. We should abolish marriage because some husbands beat their wives. Christianity should be abolished because religious excitement has sent some insane.

At the Prohibition Convention, the President, Mr. W. H. Howland said: "We are, and we must be fanatics." We however decline to fall into line with men who admit that they are, as Webster defines *fanatic*, "filled with frenzy, or wild and extravagant notions." There is a drunkenness which cometh not of whiskey or other drink, but which is as destructive to reason and manhood. We deny bluntly the right of our legislature to say what the citizens may or may not eat or drink. The law which seeks to do this is a breach of the higher law from which statute law draws its inspirations and sanctions. The advocates of the Scott Act always speak as though an Act of Parliament were in itself supreme over all rights. Their way of arguing would make an Act worthy of obedience, which ordained that every first-born child be massacred. Any law which violates what every man knows to be a natural right, a right which the overwhelming mass of men exercise in the utmost innocence, cannot be enforced. It is an outrage upon civil liberty for the mere brute force of fanaticism at the back of the police, to prevent one man taking temperately a beverage which is to him

a source of comfort, health, and social enjoyment. That another citizen abuses the same article so as to bring him within the pale of the law, is without any rational bearing upon the conduct of the citizen who uses that article for innocent purposes. The world has seen the failure of such tyrannical legislation before. If those who wish to impose the law of prohibition knew history or human nature, they would give up agitating for legislation which is irrational, provocative of worse crimes than it seeks to suppress, a menace to civil liberty, a demoraliser of public sentiment, an inciter of civil strife, a generator of new forms of vice, a hinderer of the growth of temperance principles. Such legislation is, we believe, a foe to religion most subtle and most potent.

NOTES ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION.

(Conclusion.)

IT has been thought that there is a kind of mutual antipathy and enmity between the life of contemplation and the life of action; and no doubt such an antipathy may be generated by the unwise advocates or opponents of the one or the other. But such antipathy is by no means necessary. On the contrary the life of contemplation will never be really healthful if it be divorced from action, and the life of action will never be rich and fruitful if it is separated from contemplation. In every age this separation is effected, and with seriously injurious result. One age is more contemplative, another is more practical. Perhaps we may say that in our own age the contemplative is more neglected. Yet there are many who waste their spiritual energies in theory and contemplation among ourselves, even as there are many more who are neither contemplative nor practical.

Holy Scripture undoubtedly recognizes the blessedness of the contemplative life, even as it refuses to acknowledge any life to be true which is separated from practice. The doing of the will of God is even the supreme test of a true profession. To say and to do not is to be convicted of unreality, perhaps of hypocrisy. On the other hand, the life of contemplation has a lofty place assigned to it. It is the promise given to the pure in heart that they shall see God. Nay more, the two are tied together in one of the most precious promises of God: "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face."

If, then, we would cherish a true, a deep, a rich, and a healthful Christian life, we must unite together the life of contemplation and the life of action. This is a truth which hardly needs proof or illustration. It is not only confirmed by experience; the very statement of it shows its reasonableness. Men who spend all their spiritual energy in mere thought, whether in argument, inquiry, or contemplation, must weaken their voluntary power; and where this is done, the whole mind suffers. It is by action that we get to learn the value of truth and goodness. It is by action that we