

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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PETITION FOR SIX O'CLOCK CLOSING.

For many years we have been learning what a deadly enemy to our race is strong drink. A century ago even Christian people spoke of wine as "a good creature of God." But public opinion changed, and the next step was to regard it as a medicine, and its moderate use not to be harmful, but only to be given up for the sake of the weaker brother. Now it has been banished by U.S. physicians from their pharmacopoeia, and by all advanced medicos is regarded as a poison. There was a time when our Courts discussed the question as to when a man was drunk. Now one scientist has decided that question by saying, "If a man takes a tablespoonful of alcohol, he is drunk to the extent of a tablespoonful until his system has expelled the poison."

But it has required this war to show what a deadly enemy to national efficiency is strong drink. Lloyd George said: "We are fighting three enemies, Germany, Austria, and Strong Drink, and Drink is the worst foe." Sir John Madden said: "This war has clearly shown that drink is the foe which Britain has most to fear, and in the fight against this foe there must be no relenting." General Joffre says: "Every patriot should fight against alcoholism." A senior warrant officer in the Canadian camp at Salisbury Plain writes home: "Every tragedy on Salisbury Plain has been directly caused by drink. As I write, within a few yards of me lies

a Montreal boy with his throat cut while crazed with drink."

In N.S.W., 3000 men, who had undergone on an average four months' training, were all lost to the Army through drink. We can rarely take up a paper in our own Dominion without seeing some account of a soldier in trouble, and always drink is the cause. In Hawera Court a trooper, up on three counts for stealing, due to drink, pleaded for another chance, and said he wished to serve his country, and that he would take out a prohibition order against himself and enlist under another name.

The Standing Sanitary Committee of N.S.W. Military Experts reported to the Defence Minister on the drink question as follows:—"In our opinion there is no other single cause which has so profound an effect on the health and efficiency of the troops."

The seriousness of the position has been emphasised by many men in prominent positions becoming total abstainers. Nine Cabinet Ministers are now teetotallers: Lord Kitchener, Mr McKenna, Sir Edward Grey, Mr Bonar Law, Mr Lloyd George, Mr H. Samuel, Sir John Simon, Mr Runciman, and Mr A. Henderson.

But the unpatriotic brewers and publicans, who are making money out of the nation's ruin and disgrace, have raised such a commotion, and vested interests have proved so strong, that the British Government cowered before them, and instead of totally prohibiting the sale of alcohol, restricted the hours. In certain

areas the sale has been restricted to 5½ hours daily. Mr Addison, replying to a question addressed to Lloyd George in Parliament last January, stated that in the areas where sale was restricted, the reduction in drunkenness was approximately 50 per cent. In the N.E. Coast area it was 37 per cent.; in the Liverpool and Mersey area, 46 per cent.; in the Midland area, 63 per cent.; in West Riding area, 53 per cent.

In Liverpool, during the five months before control, the convictions for drunkenness were 5752; and for the five months after control they were 3464. The Liverpool Licensing Justices reported: "Apart from figures, general observation shows a better condition in the amenities of the streets, a diminution of those offences usually associated with drunkenness, and a general improvement in public order."

In 1914 (5 months of war included) the convictions for drunkenness in London were 67,654, the highest for many years. After reduction of hours for sale of liquor the convictions dropped 43 per cent.

For 5 years ending 1914 the Victorian Drink Bill rose each year. In 1915 it dropped £1,584,506. Two causes were assigned for this, the first the Patriotic Pledge crusade, and the other 9.30 p.m. closing of bars from July 6th.

Whenever there is disturbance or riot the hotels are closed. We never hear of shops or churches being closed, only hotel bars. Senator Pearce, Federal Defence Minister,