

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

My Dear Comrades,—

No longer can it be said that New Zealand stands alone in her notoriety of having done nothing drastic or effective in the fight with the liquor traffic, for one of the most notable events of 1917 was the decision of Parliament to curtail the sale of alcohol by cutting off forty-two hours per week, the bars to be opened at 9 a.m. and closed at 6 p.m. Our first note of praise shall be "Ebenezer, hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Various causes have contributed to make Parliament at last heed the people and legislate against the Trade, outstanding among them being the petition of 177,000 electors, the public meetings held all over the Dominion, the business men's movement, and the free distribution of Arthur Mee's powerful little books, "Defeat or Victory," and "The Fiddlers." Then there was the recommendation of the Efficiency Board, and the influence of some of our secular papers, especially that of the Dunedin "Star." Among the religious publications, "The Outlook" stands pre-eminent. Last there was the work of our Unions. Though the Convention last year decided to concentrate on working for the larger issue of Total Prohibition, this did not prevent our White Ribboners from working for the curtailment of the Traffic in the meantime, and societies were mapped into districts and systematically canvassed for signatures. Church services, public meetings, and the busier streets were used for the same purpose, while the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous permeated the whole. Six o'clock closing is indeed a striking victory, but it only means that we have won another great battle on the way to final victory, and we must regard it as but a step toward Total Prohibition. Though the restriction has only been in force three months, testimonies as to the benefits are daily piling up, among them the facts that not a single arrest was made for drunkenness in Christchurch on Christmas Eve; that early in the year a Dunedin baker received an unexpected instalment of a long standing debt from the mother of a young family who had to work hard to supplement her meagre income. Making the payment she said that since her husband spent his evenings at home, she had the benefit of his full weekly wage, and not a portion as heretofore. That a retired merchant, living on the profits of strong drink, when asked about six o'clock closing said "it was the best piece of legislation the Government had passed for twenty years." That another merchant in the same city said he never was in favour of any interference with the licensed bar, but seeing the benefits of early closing, he would gladly vote for Prohibition as a war measure. That the Wellington "Times," of January, states, "The effect of early closing of hotels is shown by the Court records: In 1915, a year in which the hotels closed at 10 p.m., the number of convictions for being drunk, and drunk and dis-

orderly was 163. Last year, in which the closing hour was 6 p.m., these convictions were 32. The total number of arrest cases in 1915 was 305, last year 115." Side by side with these benefits come the startling facts that never in the history of Dunedin has there been so much beer made as in January. The beer duty for the month amounted to £9,188 12s 10d, as against £6,579 18s 9d for January last year.

The same month one of the largest consignments of liquor that ever came in one ship was landed at Port Chalmers, the cargo containing 6,000 cases of liquor, and 100 kegs of whisky for Invercargill. At the same time every flour mill in Dunedin closed down for want of material, and will not resume work until the new wheat comes in. Fortunately the people are being awakened to the tragedy of strong drink. The War is now opening the eyes of all classes to see that all we temperance workers said about strong drink in times of peace is quite true. Men who were our strong opponents, and men who were too indifferent to be for or against, now see how alcohol destroys and wastes food, how it puts up food prices, how it prevents efficiency, crowds our ships and docks, blocks commerce, hinders recruiting, ruins health, is an incentive to immorality, and therefore a producer of dreaded disease, they have learned that drink is the enemy of the soldier, is harmful to the wounded, and a destroyer of man-power, and knowing this they are prepared to line up with us and vote Prohibition. Thus the victory we have so long prayed and worked for is nearer than ever before, if by faith, prayer, and united effort we grasp it. As the war progresses, the liquor traffic comes more prominently into the limelight throughout the world. Someone has said: "Had not John Barleycorn wielded the sceptre Great Britain might ere this had compelled peace with honour." May it not be possible that before she conquers foreign foes she must overcome the enemy at home. She has tried regulation, she has closed hundreds of liquor shops, and reduced the hours of sale. She has reduced the output from 36,000,000 barrels to 10,000,000. Now she has reduced the strength of beer by one-third and commandeered whisky for munitions. But still strong drink is the enemy of the British Empire. Before the war England was making and using 36,000,000 barrels of beer a year and a corresponding quantity of spirits. Conversion into food of the grains used in the production of this vast output of intoxicants must easily mean England's victory in the War. Save or starve is the latest slogan of the Food Economy Leader, Sir Arthur Yapp. We are furnished with really distressing details of the need that exists in Britain for the avoidance of waste in every particular, if the people are not to suffer actual want. But not a word is spoken by Sir Arthur Yapp or anybody else in authority with regard to the continuance of the wicked

waste of food stuffs in the manufacture of liquor. The sale of glasses of milk in public places is now prohibited. Sugar cannot be purchased except in small quantities, children and soldiers in the hospitals and trenches have been deprived of this necessary food in like manner, but the brewers can always find sugar enough for all the beer the people want. If the Government find it necessary to placard England with posters advising the people to eat less bread, and go without meat, to show their patriotism by eating less, surely they might add, "Drink less beer." If to waste food is national treason, not only to this country, but treason to our Allies, and Sir Arthur Yapp says it is, then surely it is treason for its Government to license a trade that destroyed in brewing during the last three years 3,150,000 tons of cereal and 352,800 tons of sugar. The most solid victory over the liquor traffic has been achieved in Canada, which has made extraordinary progress in effecting a momentous change in the social life of its people. On October 4th, after a most remarkable campaign, the city of Quebec voted Prohibition by a 2,000 majority. The news has now reached us that the entire Dominion of Canada now prohibits traffic in liquor, and there is not a single bar open. The Federal Government has undertaken to suppress the manufacture of liquor. We clasp hands with our Canadian sisters and congratulate them on the white map of Canada, and hope their splendid victory will have the effect of hardening the demand for Prohibition in our own land. America is pushing ahead with wonderful rapidity towards their goal of "A Saloonless Nation by 1920." Several States have voted dry during the year 1917, and since America declared war there has been a vigorous and continuous effort to secure National Prohibition as a war measure. War-time Prohibition as a stern necessity, from the standpoint of conservation of grain, has been incessantly urged upon Members of Congress. A thousand leading Americans (men and women of all classes and creeds) united in a Memorial to Congress, asking for Prohibition as a war measure. The American Medical Association, representing over 80,000 physicians and surgeons of the United States, declared at its Annual Convention, that National Prohibition would be welcomed by the medical profession. Harvard and Yale (the American Oxford and Cambridge) inaugurated their festivals this year without alcoholic beverages, an ever-increasing number of newspapers (about 800) refused liquor advertisements, and an Act of Congress, which came into operation last July, debars from the mail in all Prohibition States any advertisement, and every publication that refers to the liquor traffic. Alcohol has been prohibited in the Army and Navy, on the railroad and in all military camps. The system of local option was so practised as to almost confine the sale of liquor to hotels and