

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

Vol. 25.—No. 289.

WELLINGTON, N.Z., JULY 18, 1919.

2s 6d Per Annum. Post Free.
Single Copy, 3d.

STATE OWNERSHIP.

"When from the throne of God, that throne where the weary have refuge, Where in the midst of distress, there is calm, that mandate is uttered, Mandate not uttered alone that day for the thousands of Judah, But to all ages addressed, and to all generations—"Go forward!"— Forward, when all seems lost, and the cause looks utterly hopeless; Forward, when brave hearts fail, and to yield is the rede of the coward; Forward, when friends fall off, the enemies gather around thee; Thou, though alone with thy God, alone in thy courage, go forward, Help, though deferred, shall arrive; ere morn the night is at darkest."

The reformer's watchword—"Go Forward." Once more it has been heard by the temperance forces of this Dominion, and once more we are preparing for a great advance. Never before have we had two battles in the space of one year, and never before have we faced the foe with such calm trust and confidence in the God of Battles. Jehovah of Hosts is our Leader and in His name we have set up our banners for the last grim fight with the organised forces of the liquor trade.

But at the beginning of the fight we wish to sound a note of warning. Some may be led astray by the fact that there are three issues on the ballot paper, and think that State Ownership may prove a good half-way house. To all such we would say despite the three alternatives on the ballot paper the issue is as sharp and clean cut as it was last time. It is the old question "Alcohol or no Alcohol." The fact that Strong Drink is sold by Government officials instead of

private owners does not lessen its power to do evil. Even if sold by an archangel it would still rob men of their senses and degrade and debase humanity. It is the "devil in solution" whoever sells it, let us keep this fact well in mind.

Mr Asquith when interviewed on this subject said that as an old chancellor of the Exchequer he had given the subject much thought. There were trades which the Government could take over and run, but the liquor trade was not such a one. No Government could afford to touch this trade with the tips of its fingers.

We are all familiar with the old story from the classics of the devoted wife who wove her web throughout the day and each night secretly unpicked the work of that day. Now if our Government owns and runs the liquor bars they will be repeating the old story: Building through the day and by night pulling down the structure they are attempting to build.

Why run a Health Department to build up and conserve the health of the Dominion, and then an alcoholic department to disease and debase every organ of the body?

Why employ an army of experts to study the habits and to circumvent the doings of the lively little microbe, and then employ another set of men to sell the poison which drugs the white blood corpuscles—nature's own expert germ destroyers.

Why build and equip St. Helen's Hospitals and employ Plunket nurses to ensure that our babies get the best possible start in life and then sell their parents the deadly drug which by alcoholising the life germs renders them incapable of producing healthy, normal children?

Why take such pains to send doctors to inspect the health and physique of our public school children, and then take from their fathers his wages to swell our State coffers, while his children go underfed and ill-clad?

The same argument holds good in every department. Why import a railway expert, at £3000 per annum, to keep our railways up to the highest point of efficiency, and then allow another department to sell a poison pronounced by all Labour experts as the "Greatest foe of efficiency?"

Why run a Labour Department, on the one hand, to watch the interests of Labour, and on the other hand run a department which competent men pronounce as the greatest foe to organised Labour?

Mr Asquith is right; no Government can afford to touch this trade with the tips of its fingers.

There are other aspects of this question. The present Act provided that if Prohibition had been carried last April the sum given in compensation must not exceed 4½ millions. Should the people at next poll decide in favour of State Ownership, there is no maximum sum stated in the Act, and quite a modest estimate is 12½ millions. The liquor licenses belong to the State, they all expire at the end of next June. Why should the Government buy what is already its own? All the Government need do is to announce that after next June it will not issue any more licenses, but will keep the sale of intoxicants in its own hands.

Is there any reason why the Government should purchase palatial hotels, and huge buildings, which cater to feed and lodge the travelling public? Their owners can still run these places, it is only the bar which is to be closed.