

YOUNG WOMEN'S EFFICIENCY LEAGUE.

ADDRESS BY BISHOP JULIUS.

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About the beginning of last century, a great change, involving many restrictions, passed over the life of people in England. Law after law, regulation after regulation, circumscribed the life of the country. Another such upheaval has taken place during the last five years. Among the customs affected by the War, the most important were those connected with liquor. These were found to be antagonistic to efficiency, and if Great Britain was to win, the use of alcohol had to be greatly restrained. In other words, the conviction was forced upon the people that liquor spelled ruin in war time. First, naval and military officers issued orders for their own men and the cities in which they were quartered, restricting hours and places of sale. The people made no complaint. Then, somewhat timidly, the authorities took further action as to the powers of Justices in curtailing licenses. This roused some opposition, but the Government began to take up the efficiency problem in earnest, following on Mr Lloyd George's famous speech declaring alcohol a greater danger to Great Britain than all the enemy's armies and submarines. It was a tremendous and truthful denunciation of custom and traffic centuries old in the Homeland.

What were the results of the partial Prohibition thus put into operation—not only in Great Britain, for each of the Allied Powers dealt somehow with the problem? First, we won the War by the grace of God. Again and again it was shown how these restrictions saved the young recruits, and how the slackers among the munition workers became industrious and efficient under this policy. Second, there was created a public opinion that we must never go back to pre-War conditions. This new effectiveness taught us that one old catch-cry was utter and absolute "rot"—the saying that we cannot make a man sober by Act of Parliament. We did make men sober, because we had to have them sober. You can make people sober if you take away opportunities to drink on every side of them. Yet the old catch-cry will be heard again, though there is nothing in it.

This new public opinion was based, first on the memory of what drink has been. I have worked in the slums, I have lived in the country places of England, and the awful curse that drink has been in both is written into my very soul. Think of the enfeebled children, the wretched homes, the miserable women. We cannot have back again the vice and degeneration that comes from a public-house at every corner.

Then this new opinion was founded on actual experience of the conditions prevailing without the traffic. It could be done without. And it was realised what great things under God's mercy a sober country could do. Lastly, the necessity of it was driven home. We had emerged victorious, but sadly battered. It would be long years before any of the Allies recovered. It is easy to forget what the country owes while we ourselves prosper, but high prices must convince us that we are near bankruptcy. Great Britain, they say, must suffer greater loss yet before shipping, transit and supplies are fully organised again. Turn to that great, that enormous, country, America, almost unharmed by the War—richer, indeed, than ever. I don't grudge it. I honour and respect America; I love America; but I do not want to see Great Britain go down before her. She has got the ships, money, power, organisation. On even terms, how could we compete with her? How much less once she is a Prohibition nation? Great Britain and her Dominions are saddled with a yearly payment for the drink. How in God's name are we to compete with a country that is free?

Australia spent £95,000,000 in drink straight out during the War. "Ah! But there are compensations!" they say. Where? Compensations! The loss of power, efficiency, vitality! I love the land of my birth; I love the land of my adoption, and pray God they may never go under by reason of drink. And you must make up your mind about this thing—you who think one thing to-day, hear someone else talk, and then think something else to-morrow. Do not take it from me alone. Pray! Think it out! Do the right thing in the sight of God!

Look at the three issues. Take Continuance first. That means going back to pre-war conditions. There is plenty of drinking still. We have our Prohibition areas as before, but

they are near "wet" areas. I can get drunk in Ashburton by taking a run up to Rakaia. I do not say anything against the men in the trade. They fight for their own interest—so would you. The Trade is strong and rich; it knows what ropes to pull. In the Old Country it is the greatest organisation reform has to face; here, after only 50 or 60 years, it is quite strong enough. The men in it know more of it than we do; yet private interest, a curse born of other people's loss, blinds them to the results. No man should be put in such a position; it is a marvel that publicans are as good as they are. I only wish them a better job.

New Zealand compares well with other countries, you say? I am not dealing with statistics. But remember that the "sober" country contains so many total abstainers that the remainder must drink heavily to bring the figures up to what they are. Do the people who talk of our sobriety ever travel in boats, or are they always dead sick in their berths? Do they ever travel in trains, and see the drunken men passing up and down, to and fro, all the time? Do they know how many ruined homes there are here—how many hungry children and wretched women? Don't trust the parsons about it! Go to the nearest nurse and ask her. I am not talking of statistics, but I will say there are more institutions in New Zealand for looking after other people's children than in any other country I know of, and the root of the matter is usually drink. That is Continuance! Don't vote for that!

What of the future? We have a split vote this time; some will say, "Vote for State Control." My first objection is that I don't know what I am voting for. I know what I vote for in Continuance, and would at least expect the devil's thanks for that. But the other is a vote for a State experiment. If the Government had had experience, some might say it should be tried. But Government is not experienced, and not qualified to deal with such a charge. If a member of Parliament can travel from Wellington to the Hutt without seeing a drunk man, I would not give much for his powers of observation. State Control is an ideal thing on paper, and always a failure in practice, wherever tried. It demands an ideal Government and an ideal Executive. We