

STATE CONTROL.

(Continued).

(A paper by Miss Jessie Mackay.)
AMERICAN EXPERIMENTS IN
STATE CONTROL.

Up to this century, the South Carolina Liquor Dispensary was the greatest State Control experiment tried in the New World. Many years before that, some small municipal dispensary schemes had been tried in Georgia and South Dakota, some for medicinal, some for beverage purposes, and all failures. South Carolina established the Dispensary in 1893, under peculiar circumstances. The menace of a large, demoralised negro population had turned the State towards prohibition. Benjamin Tillman, then Governor, really believed that prohibition would not work, and hastily pushed through a Dispensary bill to keep it out.

The Act provided for the sale of liquors in sealed packages of not less contents than a pint, nor more than five gallons, not to be consumed or even opened on Government premises. Searching documents as to age and sobriety had to be signed by purchasers. The profits at first went to education. Never was State Control set up under better auspices. Even the prohibitionists agreed to work Governor Tillman's scheme. But the inevitable happened. The saloon's place was soon taken by the "blind tiger," or illicit grogshop. These multiplied like flies. The Dispensary was shaken by adverse Court cases, and brought peace by selling to the "blind tigers" and shutting its eyes to illicit trading. Twenty-four years of bitter disillusion taught Benjamin Tillman all that Gothenburg had already learned—that no form of State Control really controls, but becomes the tool of clamorous appetite nourished by nationalised drinking, and of shameless commercialism.

Revenue flowed into South Carolina's coffers, but it proved a bag with holes. The business fell into worse and worse hands, corruption increased; State funds were appropriated, violence and debauchery thrived round about the "blind tigers," and legitimate business fell off everywhere; neither life nor property was safe. War against the Dispensary began in 1903. Governor Tillman, now honestly fighting his Frankenstein monster, found that State

Control's claws pierce deep. Not till 1916 was prohibition secured in South Carolina.

Canada, unhappily for herself, provides the world with object lessons in State Control to-day. The Eastern provinces had been fields of temperance work far back in the last century. Nova Scotia has been under prohibition since 1894, while New Brunswick had passed it in the seventies, though it was not fully effective till 1916. Long successes in Local Option had led up to great prohibition gains during the war years, and fortunately Local Option still remains even where provinces have reverted to liquor-selling.

The outbreak of war hastened Prohibition in Canada; the moral decline towards and after the end of the war snatched away the fruits of victory in four provinces and shook enforcement in all. To follow the lightning transformations of Canada's nine provinces between 1914 and 1925, is almost impossible. During those 11 years every province save French-populated Quebec had been under prohibition. Four, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Prince Edward Island still remain.

Four, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, have gone under State Control. Quebec alone has never tried prohibition, though many of its municipalities have gone dry under local option, and only a snatch vote for State Control in 1919 averted a prohibition Act technically through the year before. The country of Wilfred Laurier will yet be won for temperance.

It is unfair to brand Canada as fickle for these reversions. The loosening of moral sanctions during the war, does not explain the matter altogether. Difficulties met Canada that did not operate in the United States. The immediate trouble was that Dominion law gives provinces power to vote out sale and importation, but not manufacture and exportation. Thus "dry." Ontario has several breweries in active operation. When we consider that Canada has borne the brunt of rum-running like America; when we understand the interprovincial frontier difficulties, and the anomalies of manufacture and export on "dry" territory, we can except the falling away of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Saskatch-

ewan as temporary counsels of despair. British Columbia never really enforced prohibition on its scattered population. Manitoba and Saskatchewan have huge foreign elements, almost all anti-prohibition.

We are always told that pure liquor, good hotel accommodation, and respectable conditions of sale are among the benefits of State Control. Very instructive comments on this belief are furnished in the reports of the "All-Canada" Conference of Prohibitionists, held March, 1925. I have added facts from authoritative press clippings here and there.

Alberta's State Liquor commission has found licensees inexpressibly dirty in serving, and largely in collusion with illicit grog-sellers. Beer licenses are increasing (beer and spirits are sold apart in Canada). Alberta, like Gothenburg, has found beer the steady lure to draw youth to the bar. Beer drinking among women is alarmingly on the increase. Liquor advertisements have been seen even in boys' school magazines.

British Columbia, the Cinderella of Canada in some respects, reports all promises of the notorious Moderation League broken (the Moderation League is behind all trouble in Canada). The law is everywhere in less repute. A set back is the recent permission to sell beer by the glass. Half the huge quantity of liquor sold is bootleg, municipal morality is affected, "blind tigers" must not be cleaned up or fines will fall off councillors say. The judiciary is not what it was. Indescribable degradation and contempt of life are shown in smuggling off the coast. Crime is increasing. In places, all profits are wiped out in enforcement.

Manitoba reports impossibility of checking illicit sale, with greatly increased drunkenness, disorder, and debauchery. Drinking is common at young people's parties. Much unemployment comes through drink, and wife-beating is common.

Saskatchewan, latest fallen of the provinces, sees the ubiquitous Moderation League unblushingly out for restoration of private license. Deliberate attacks on the youthful mentality will keep up the supply of drunkards for to-morrow.

As to Quebec, no ink is black enough wherewith to write the scandals of State Control since private license was abandoned in 1921. Strict as others on paper, the