

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Delivered March 3, 1948, by Miss C. E. Kirk, J.P.

In the whole of the world's history there has never been a time when the power and ability of women has had such open acknowledgment and, from most people, such willingly expressed appreciation. The two Wars which are within the memory of many of us and within the knowledge of all, certainly provided many opportunities for women to prove their mental and physical equipment; in the fighting Forces, in Industry, in Commerce, and in that foundation Force the "Home Front." Of all the women who command our loving respect surely none hold a higher place than those who stayed at home and cooked, sewed, washed, cared for children and old people, helped short staffed hospitals, packed goods for overseas loved ones and for Red Cross distribution, all these extras done in their "spare time," though goodness alone knows how they found any, until they were so weary they could hardly keep their eyes open or bear to put their shoes on. All this done with cheerfulness and courage in spite of hearts torn with anxiety for the safety of those they loved. All this because we were marching to victory! Where are we going now? What sort of victory are we marching toward? Are we marching at all? Recently we have been encouraged by the appointment of women to some executive positions; but, with their appointment, comes our responsibility to do what we can to help them to achieve the best within their reach; the responsibility, also, to see that such women are fully informed as to the evils of the Liquor Trade. Quite a large number of people say, "Oh, I don't want to know about those things." That is a pity; but we must see to it that they are told. If they will not do the right thing when they know, we cannot help it. If we have given them the facts they cannot expect us to give them the brains to use them. That is their business. Recently there have been a number of things to encourage us in our work. In our own country we find some of the Churches very much alive to the work of the Devil as exemplified in the liquor traffic. Doubtless there are many Churches who are still, for various reasons, unwilling to stand solidly for the abolition of this traffic. Still, it is, I think, safe to say that it would be difficult to find a Church in which there were not "five righteous" in this matter. Then again we are frequently reminded, both over the air and in the daily papers, that the consumption of alcohol by motorists, even if only taken in small quantities, is liable to produce accidents. It is not so very long ago that if an intoxicated motorist could walk a straight line it was accepted as proof that he was in a fit state to drive a car. Now scientific investigation has proved, far beyond any

possible doubt, that a person who has drunk even one glass of alcoholic beverage, be it wine, beer, or cider, is inevitably poisoned and his judgment impaired to a greater or lesser degree.

It is difficult to understand the apathy of Christian people, especially Christian women, in regard to the horrors caused by the use of beverage alcohol; women who during the War would have allowed nothing to stand in the way of their hospital, parcel-packing, bed-making duties, now seem to think death, serious physical injury, and moral degradation are of little or no moment. "I didn't come to the meeting, because I had a visitor staying with me; I had arranged to meet a friend in town," &c. All these and many other excuses are offered as reasons for not helping to safeguard either one's own or one's neighbours' young people and children, and for not joining in the march for victory over evil. We would have been very ashamed if our friends had given such a feeble excuse for not doing their share of hospital work or comfort packing. Of course there are quite a number who are at various times prevented from attending the Union meetings by circumstances beyond their control. To them we offer our sympathy and are thankful to know that they are with us in spirit. What are we to do about those apathetic ones and those who do not care at all? Who are the people who give most help to the liquor traffic? Those who want to make money quickly, and to that end set aside the moral and physical welfare of their neighbours for the sake of "big money." Those who say, "Oh, I don't drink much. I can take it or let it alone." Can they? If they can "let it alone," if it means so little to them, why do they not let it alone? Then there are those who say, "Oh we never keep it in the house. We only have it for Christmas and New Year, or birthdays or weddings." These people consider themselves "moderate" drinkers. So they are, but would any one of them defend "moderate" lying or "moderate" stealing, or "moderate" murdering? If not, how can they defend moderate drinking, which is acknowledged to be the most prolific and, indeed, the chief cause of all these things, together with disease, cruelty, and every known vice. Does it not strike you as more than a little queer to hear people, who appear to be quite sane, setting aside certain times and seasons when they will with pleasure hand round glasses of poison to their family and friends? They declare with such an air of virtue that they would not think of keeping it in the house. Why, if it is so fine a thing do they not keep it in the house? Is it not because right down in their hearts they know that the thing is evil?

We have watched with great interest the progress of the Beer Boycott. We know what the results of beer-drinking are but it is not often that our daily papers publish such delightful facts, which only need to be read to prove how much better off a non-alcohol-drinking community is compared with one of the beer-drinking kind. The following appeared in the "Dominion" of December 11, 1948:

GREYMOUTH, December 10.

Since the beer boycott—or the "beercott" as it is now known—was imposed on the West Coast it has had six important results.

Gardens now receive more attention; houses are being painted and repaired; absenteeism at the mines has almost disappeared; earnings have increased; coal production has never been higher; and everyone agrees there is a better social and domestic atmosphere prevailing than there was before.

These points are made in an official statement issued by the Grey Valley Miners' Central Committee.

We hope that at least some of those who learnt the advantages of abstinence from alcoholic beverages will have sufficient strength of mind and purpose to continue on their better way.

There are many indications of a forward movement in the States, and this extract from the "Union Signal" of December, 1947, should greatly hearten us.

Four States Show "Dry" Trend

From New York, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee comes news of victories for the "drys" in local option and municipal contests.

Probably the most important incident was the election last week at Knoxville of an ex-Tennessee University football star, Judge James W. Elmore, Jun., who, although a Republican, was elected Mayor on a "dry" platform openly endorsed by those opposed to legal sale, over George Dempster, Democrat, who reputedly was backed by the Crump pro-liquor machine. Report of the unofficial vote gives Judge Elmore a margin of 1,089, or a total of 11,914 to 10,825 for his opponent.

The national significance of this result appears to be that Mayor Elmore is likely to greatly strengthen the enforcement of the dry law in Knoxville, now said to be the largest "dry" city in the country.

Word from New York indicates that out of 18 local option campaigns launched, the "drys" won 14, in 10 different counties; the "wets" two. Two others were thrown out because of incorrect petitions. Of the 14 counties which voted dry, five changed from wet to dry.

Ohio correspondence shows that nearly 100 local option contests were