

The White Ribbon

FOR GOD AND HOME AND HUMANITY

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THE LICENSING BILL.

Long expected, eagerly looked forward to, sternly petitioned for, earnestly prayed for, at length Cabinet has brought down the Licensing Bill. It is divided into two parts: The first part provides for a special Licensing Poll to be taken in April next. It grants the prayer of the petition of over 240,000 electors, and gives a Referendum on the Efficiency Board's proposals. The two issues are (1) National Continuance, (2) National Prohibition with Compensation. It limits the compensation to a sum not to exceed four and a half million pounds. It provides that if National Prohibition be carried, it comes into force on June 30, 1919, and that the issue be carried by a bare majority of the valid votes recorded. It also gives finality as far as such can be given. Section 20 provides that no Licensing Poll shall be taken after the carrying of National Prohibition. No Parliament can bind succeeding Parliaments, but this Bill makes it impossible to take another poll without fresh legislation.

The second part of the Bill deals with what follows if Prohibition is not carried at the forthcoming Special Licensing Poll in April. Should National Continuance be carried next April, then at the next Licensing Poll, to be taken at the next General Election, three issues are to be submitted to the voter: (1) National Continuance, (2) National Prohibition Without Compensation, (3) State Purchase and Control of Liquor Trade. No vote is to be valid unless two issues are struck out. For either Prohibition or State Control to be carried, it must secure more than half the num-

ber of valid votes cast. That is to say, that neither of these proposals can be carried unless it secures an absolute majority of the valid votes cast. But if neither Prohibition nor State Control be carried, then the Bill provides that National Continuance shall be deemed to have been carried. This ballot paper entirely favours the Trade. It is a case of "heads they win, and tails we lose," since National Continuance is the only issue that can be carried by a minority vote. Should National Prohibition be carried at this poll, it comes into operation on the thirtieth day of June next after the taking of the General Licensing Poll. No person is to be compensated and no licensing poll shall at any time hereafter be taken in any district. It settles the question finally. Should National Continuance be carried at the Licensing Poll next April, and also be carried at the next General Licensing Poll, then the local no-license vote shall be cut out, and we have the three issues to be submitted at each poll.

Our readers will see from this brief summary how very necessary it is to carry Prohibition at the Special Poll next April. We have a straight-out vote, Prohibition versus Continuance, to be carried by a bare majority, and to be immediately operative. It carries with it compensation not exceeding four and a half million pounds. How true that we suffer for our mistakes as well as for our sins. The Parliament committed a ghastly mistake when they consented to allow the will of the electors deliberately expressed at the ballot box to be flouted for 4½ years. For that mistake we now have to pay. But who that loves his fellows would begrudge the cost. Let us hold the scales and weigh im-

partially! On one side we place 4½ million pounds; upon the other side (1) 45 millions the trade would cost in hard cash during 4½ years; (2) all the lives cut short by alcohol in that period; (3) all the ruined homes, broken hearts, degenerate lives, and all the moral and physical wreckage caused by drink in 4½ years. "Shylock" lamented alternately his ducats and his daughter, but what Christian elector would grumble over the loss of our ducats if we saved our sons and daughters? Get busy, pray devoutly, and hammer away stoutly! The Secretary of the Licensed Victuallers' Association assures us that they will fight. We quite believe the Trade will fight a most determined battle; in very truth, the fiercest fight of all our long campaign. But are we to allow the men who are fighting for dollars, out for gain, pure and simple, to beat the Mothers who are fighting for their sons and daughters? Start work at once. Do not wait for meetings; speak to friends, neighbours, tradespeople, and to every one you meet. Help to enrol electors, to educate electors, and to get electors to the poll. From now until the Poll is over slacken not our effort; other things can stand on one side. God's work for us now is to out-vote the liquor traffic. See that we do it "so bravely, so wisely, so well, Angels will hasten the story to tell."

In this great campaign faith and work must go hand in hand. God is on our side, and "He wins who fights with God."

"For right is right, since God is God,

And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty
To falter would be sin."