

liquor laws are divided into two great classes: First—The Nephelists who consider alcohol in every form, whether distilled or fermented to be poison, and therefore wish the sale thereof to be entirely suppressed.

Second—Those who see no objection to moderate drinking, especially of the less alcoholic beverages, and regard the idea of prohibition as an impracticable chimera. The latter, of course, is the larger, if not the wiser class, and has the majority of the people upon its side. Strange infatuation, people who will suffer, fight and die for freedom will sell themselves voluntarily into the most abject slavery! Wisdom negated by folly. It is the moral of one of Dante's pictures in the Inferno.

A man was once ordered to make a rope of hay to reach the outer world; his only hope for light and liberty depended upon his success. But while he industriously twisted his life rope, a group of wild asses behind a wall complacently ate up his work.

The brightest state of social happiness would be reached if its best individuals were permitted to rule; but the wisest and noblest endeavors are subject to dilution if not defeat by the actions of adverse elements. There are weeds growing close to your well cultivated garden. Their seeds are blown over and plant themselves in your soil and hybridize your plants. The law affords you no protection. You have no right to pull up weeds or plant flowers over the boundary line of social rights. Man's free agency must be respected; coercion and restraint is unlawful; but persuasion is permissible, and the rule of the majority is the order of heaven.

Mankind is the growth—the wheat and tares—of the world, and cannot if they would, change each other's nature. All human destiny, individually and aggregated, is by divine appointment, as much as cultivated fields are the work and design of the prudent husbandman. "The Most High hath divided to the nations their inheritances, and set the bounds of the people" distributing and grouping the qualities and characteristics according to His divine purpose. If the Lord of the estate has permitted an enemy to sow tares in his field, he has a purpose therefore, and is alone responsible for the noxious crop.

The harvest of the world approaches; the gathering of the fruits and results of the entire past seasons of growth has commenced. As the process of separation goes on the richness and beauty of the pure grain contrasts strikingly with the rank and pestiferous materials left to dry or rot upon the fields. The good will survive and, being freed from the incumbrance of adverse environment, will hasten to a glorious destiny.

Much has already been done. African slavery is abolished; natural depravity is out-lawed; the divine rights of kings and the regal privilege of wealth stands trembling at the bar; and the drinking fiend is doomed, though stout bears despair at sight of the terrible monster.

The age that can harness Niagara will stanch or control this ruinous flood, and turn the destructive force into channels of thrift and enjoyment. Alcoholized forces have their treasures of human blessing yet undiscovered. They will not always be used to torture and kill, but to benefit and comfort man.

But prohibition at best can only be a

partial, not a radical cure of intemperance. It lops off a branch or two here and there, but leaves the trunk standing and the root untouched. It is as ineffectual as a bank of sand against the inflowing tide; the flood is attracted by man's unbridled appetite. The grand hope is in personal reform. Neither legitimate commerce nor smuggling can flourish unless there be a demand for the goods. Still, when a pestilence rages, every mitigant is welcome. Prohibition should find favor if only for discovering the evil and showing fight.

A notable feature of our times is, social commotions come in waves. The day of individual prodigies is past. In the past ages the great epochs and revolutions begun with a single character; each science, each reform has started in some solitude and thence expanded into society. Now the schemes of reform break in cloud bursts, and changes occur by avalanches. The demons of crime and reform have made a co-partnership, each gathers food for the other.

A sudden sweep of moral enthusiasm into the official circles, frightening the industrious speculators, and tossing them upon the waves of virtuous wrath, is accompanied by a sirocco, from some death-breeding bourne of murders, suicides and gnostly horrors too painful for thought.

Such spasmodic reforms, work mischief instead of amendment. At any moment a tempest of prohibitory agitation might burst upon some devoted locality, and have a swath of ruined whisky stills and beer shops in its wake; but what a brood of shirking, smuggling fiends would rise out of the small; the forbidden waters would be the sweeter because they were stolen.

Besides the natural craving for drink, prohibition was to fight sordid interest. A trick of advertising is to give a fraud a good name. The devil is a good advertiser. In early times a swindling combination for oppression and plunder, torture and murder, was formed; their named religion, it "took" amazingly. The infamous liquor traffic is called business! Wonderful enterprise! Christian nations manufacturing a drink that will degrade a savage; turn a statesman into an idiot, and make a man kill his dearest friend!

Business is honorable industry, and harmless trading. But what intamy is too foul for the lust of gold to sanctify? To threaten this monster with prohibition seems frivolous mockery. Nothing less than the mighty angel, self-denial will vanquish this dread Apollyon.

An interesting question is: what is the duty of the church regarding prohibition? The term church represents much—things animate and inanimate; ethical and secular. The popular notion of a church is that it is an institution of importance, chiefly to a certain class of beneficiaries who know how to identify their personal interests with it; that its benefits as a moral force is doubtful, if not detrimental to strict rectitude.

Religion, so called has much improved from moral outside influences, and it stands today upon an equal footing with politics, science and philosophy. The church has a necessary existence to afford satisfaction to certain requisites of man's spiritual nature. The late Rev. David Swing of Chicago said in one of his sermons: "An American may be forgiven by the present age if he

should fail to become a Methodist or a Presbyterian, but there can be no forgiveness for him should he fail to become a gentleman."

The attitude of the church towards prohibition might be set down as identical with that of any of the great party divisions; not as being either fiercely hostile to, or ardently zealous for the measure. Certain it is that the great moral reforms have originated, and are being carried on outside of church circles. It is no special praise to any church or any party to say that it is interested in the extirpation of evil. Morality is a common duty. No glory is due any man because he assails wickedness; he is not blameless if he does not.

Further, can a church as such, act authoritatively in the matter of restriction? Drinking is sanctioned by law. The church cannot issue an injunction to stop it. The authority must come through legislation, and the change effected by the machinery of party platforms, election campaigns and ballot-boxes. Can the sacred functions of the church be joined with the worldly offices of politics? If it be the true and genuine institution it will not be so joined.

An institution to be the true church must belong to Jesus Christ, not to any human individual or corporation. If a man makes a church it is his own church; the creature belongs to its author. Dedication or consecration does not make it the Lord's unless he accepts it. The true church must be unique and peculiar from anything of man's origination, and management.

"It is a garden walled around,  
Chosen and made peculiar ground."

The trees are choice, and the fruits good and comely. The husbandman's duties lie within the sacred enclosure, to prune and train the spreading branches, to foster the tender plants, and treasure the precious fruit. The sole office of the church is to promote righteousness, and that includes the extirpation of every kind of soil. It has only one formula for the treatment of immorality, and the whole is comprised in a single word—repent.

Before there was a church, when moral darkness covered the earth, this was the word that broke the silence of the ages, uttered by the inspired recluse from India's wild solitudes; the keynote of Salvation's anthem. "Repent! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" The grand opening of the Christian dispensation was by this brief, but compendious, injunctive.

The Apostles were charged with a mission to "every creature." Upon the day of Pentecost, the piercing shafts of self-conviction, forced the importunate cry "What shall we do?" Peter, the chief Apostle uttered the one only authoritative response—Repent.

This remedial agent is truly God-like in simplicity and effectiveness. As a perfect cleanser of character nothing can be added to it. Without this primary purifying, educational embellishment is but gilding decayed wood or adorning the harlot. Let the drinker repent, is the prohibition of the church.

True it is, this high ground claimed for the church is too lofty for the present social status. The people will not accept reforms which demand self-denial. Still, tokens are visible of a new and higher conception of life by vast numbers. And the old alarm word of the rugged prophets is again heard.