

the land of the golden spirit. France, of all the countries in the world, was probably the country where it might have been expected that temperance or prohibition in any shape or form, would make the slowest progress, and yet we see the great revolution that has taken place there. When we read in the newspapers of what the gallant French army is doing, we must realize that that army is composed of temperate soldiers, trained under prohibition. Liqueurs, absinthe, and all such liquors have been banished from the French army. I desire to read a couple of extracts to show what France has done in the way of bringing about a change.

Repeated attempts have been made to deal with alcoholism, but with little success, due largely to the electoral power of the enormous number of persons engaged in the wine industry, the making of wine, the distilling of absinthe, and other spirits. In 1910 it was reported that France had one wine and spirit bar to every 82 of the inhabitants as against one to every 246 in Germany, 430 in England, and 9,900 in Norway and Sweden.

In 1906 the Academie de Medecine of France invited its members to collect statistics in reference to deaths, etc., due to alcohol. The reports were appalling. From Normandy it was stated: "The consumption of alcohol has risen steadily and enormously. The number of births has decreased by about one half. The mortality has risen 4 per cent since 1831. Crime has increased over 4 per cent. Lunacy, suicides, and sudden deaths have largely increased, while the number of men unfit for military service is also rapidly increasing." The Government became alarmed and issued white placards calling the nation's attention to the evils of alcoholism. Temperance diagrams and lessons were introduced into the public schools, and other methods were adopted with a view of staying the course.

M. Briand and his Government, in 1909, supported a measure in the National Assembly for the prohibition of the spirit absinthe and to limit the number of liquor bars to not more than one to every 200 of the inhabitants. This moderate reform, however, was defeated: The Prime Minister declared: "The Government views the situation with alarm; it is terrible, and it is a question of national interest, for the very life of the nation is at stake." In 1911 a measure simply reducing the number of liquor bars was carried through the Senate by 137 against 132. The Bill was, however, rejected in the Chamber.

Then we come to the change which took place when war broke out:

The Government, on August 11, 1914, issued an official proclamation prohibiting the sale of absinthe during mobilization, and a number of Prefects, including Paris, ordered the closing of all drinking places at 8 p.m. The results were declared to be so satisfactory that the temporary closing was continued until January 10, 1915, when the President issued a decree permanently prohibiting the sale of absinthe, and on February 12, 1915, this action was approved by the National Assembly and a measure passed prohibiting for all time the

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manufacture, exportation, and sale of absinthe and all similar liquors. The Paris correspondent of the Standard, on January 15, 1915, in a lengthy article said: "Looked at from a broad point of view these decrees are as much a measure of national defence for the future as the operations in the field are at present one. They constitute a declaration of war against the insidious domestic foes, the pests of alcoholism, and all its train—tuberculosis, degeneracy, and diminished nativity. A reduction of 50 per cent in the consumption of cheap spirits would soon make itself felt in an increased birthrate, in a reduction of infant mortality, and in a more vigorous and healthy generation of Frenchmen. It is not only doctors, but economists who have already cried out against the scourge of alcoholism."

M. Ribot in the Chamber of Deputies on February 15, 1915, said:

If the Chamber stops at the suppression of absinthe only, it will not have gone far enough. There must be a reform of the whole legislation on all alcoholic liquors. This question will be forced on all governments consequent on the enormous evils flowing from alcohol.

It was then decided by a vote of 481 against 52 to refer the question of "Alcoholism in France" to the Commission of Hygiene "to consider and report how best to deal with the evil."

I shall make a passing reference to our great enemy, Germany, simply by giving a couple of quotations to show what has been done there. I do not wish to set up Germany as an example, but, as indicating that there was preparedness in Germany on this subject also, let me give a few facts. As far back as 1911, in the report of the Prussian Government, it is stated:

The use of spirits among the wood-turners has practically ceased; beer drinking is growing less and less. Milk is taking the place of beer." A number of labour and Socialistic organizations have also issued recommendations to their members to limit the use of alcoholic liquors. In March, 1912, a Local Veto Bill was for the first time introduced into the Reichstag. The Bill provided that "Every precinct in the German Empire, its colonies and protectorates, has the right to prohibit within its borders the industrial manufacture, importation, purchase, and sale of alcoholic beverages." The measure was supported by a petition signed by over 500,000 electors.

At the outbreak of the war an order was issued by the General Staff prohibiting spirits from being served to the millions of German soldiers and sailors during mobilization. And this prohibition has since been made permanent by special orders. The keepers of beer halls and other places where alcoholic liquors are sold have been rigidly restricted, under heavy penalties, as to the amount of beer which can be supplied to the soldiers and sailors. During seven months' travel as an American citizen, in Germany after the outbreak of war, Mr. Page Gaston, F.R.G.S., Hon. Secretary of the International Prohibition Confederation, says that among the hundreds of thousands of German