

The Latest Failure.

THE following article is taken from the editorial columns of the *Manitoba Free Press*:-

"Among the various legislative experiments that have been resorted to in various lands to solve the liquor traffic problem, the dispensary system of South Carolina has held a conspicuous place. It has been in force for thirteen years. It is a system which abolishes the license and all similar systems commonly in use and substitutes state monopoly. Licenses are privilege to have entire prohibition of the traffic if they choose, but a decision against prohibition involves the introduction of state saloons or dispensaries. These are in charge of salaried officials having no interest in extending the traffic. Drinking on the premises is not allowed. Sales must be made in spirits of not less than half a pint, and in malt liquors of not less than a pint. The dispensaries are open only in the daytime and on week days. Sales to minors and intemperate persons are prohibited. A State Dispensary Board buys all liquors and distributes the same to the dispensaries—thus making it possible to maintain strict accounting.

It was the hope of the promoters of the South Carolina dispensary system that it would drive liquor selling out of politics, reduce the evils of intemperance to a minimum and free the traffic generally of political scandal and social demoralization. But a legislative investigation now going on reveals the fact that the system is honeycombed with graft, that illicit selling is quite general and that widespread dissatisfaction with the system exists. These disclosures afford one more proof of the

wisdom of the statesman who declared that it is impossible to say how any legislative experiment will work out. So much depends upon the human factors working it out. The South Carolina system may be described as being akin in principle to public ownership in the elimination of private profit. But to make such a system thorough and consistent, South Carolina would have to go into the manufacture as well as the sale of liquors, and prohibit purchases from outside the state. The latter is beyond the power of any of the commonwealths which make up the United States. As a matter of fact the chief source of the corruption which is now being investigated is the sharp competition of distillers and brewers within and without South Carolina, to gain the patronage of the State Dispensary Board. One member of the Board has testified that the representative of a Baltimore concern proposed to make it worth his while to the extent of \$30,000 to use his influence on the Board in favor of the Baltimore concern's goods. The competing dealers appear to have exerted a demoralizing influence upon state officials from the Dispensary Board down through the whole system, the officials in charge of the dispensaries, the latter being bribed to push the sales of certain brands of liquors and requisition the Board for those brands. The failure of the system is set forth by ex Senator McLaurin of South Carolina, in language which certainly is not lacking in vigor. He declares that the people of that state "have at last been aroused to recognition of the fact that the sale of liquor by the state is inimical to the spirit and genius of our political institutions sub-