

Can the law refuse this sanction? Surely it can. By virtue of a contract entered into by the state and the individual, the individual is permitted to engage in the liquor traffic. But this contract is for one year, and at the end of that time the state may terminate the contract. The individual is aware of this when he enters upon the contract, and no plea of vested interests can prevent the conclusion that license is restriction, and that the right to restrict admits the right to prohibit, not only the individual engaged, but the entire traffic.

So much for the argument that prohibition is wrong in principle. Let us now see the positive arguments that prohibition is right in principle.

By means of its object, its circumstances, and its end, we are unable to prove that, intrinsically, the action of disposing of liquor by sale is morally wrong. Analysis may assist us. The object is evidently to reap the benefits to be derived from the sale of liquor. If we purchase any other commodity, the benefits from the transaction are mutual. With a transaction involving the sale of liquor the benefits are manifestly confined to the agent, since liquor, to say the least, does not possess the slightest potentiality for good. Then the object is purely a selfish one, and might surely be attained in another pursuit. From the point of view of the end the same is true.

Concerning the circumstances, could we justify the sale of liquor to a man known to be a drunkard, to a man whose means were required for the sustenance of his family, or, in a word, to a man who was liable to injury, directly or indirectly, because of this sale? If not, few indeed are the instances in which the sale of liquor can be justified, and we are able to place the liquor traffic in the category of moral evils. Beyond a doubt, it is the efficient cause of intemperance, and of all its attendant evils, and as such has no place in another category.

The true object of legislation is to prevent—not to protect evil. If we recognize the principle that a government should frame its laws so as to make it as hard as possible for a man to do wrong, and as easy as possible for a man to do right, then, since intemperance is an evil, dangerous to the material and moral well-being of man, and the liquor traffic is largely the efficient cause of this evil, surely prohibition, rather than license, affords the maximum fulfilment of this principle.

The morality of a people is proportionate to the morality of