The Prohibition Question

Opposite Opinions, as Expressed by Two Eminent Canadians, Touching the Coming Plebiscite Vote.

FOR

By F. S. Spence, Secretary of the Prohibition Alliance, in Methodist Magazine.

The plebiscite to be taken on the approaching 29th of September will be one of the most important political events in the history of Canada. Upon its result will deend the immediate future of the prohibition reform. It will materially advance or seriously retard the coming of the time that is most assuredly ahead of us, when the liqor traffic will no longer have the protection and authorization of law.

It is just 70 years since, in 1828, the first Canadian total abstinence society was formed at Beaver River, in Nova Scotia, and there was begun a work that has almost revolutionized the habits of our people and has developed into a mighty social and political force.

LEGISLATION NECESSARY.

Ever since that time, earnest women and men have striven hard for the development of the movement then inaugurated. A short period of effort on moral suasion lines soon made it clear that the abounding temptation supplied by the legalized liquor traffic continually thwarted and defeated the efforts of those who were endeavoring to shield the innocent and reclaim the fallen. The advocates of sobriety were obliged to become the opponents of the licensee system, and for many years the battle against the drink evil has been fought on the dual lines of total abstinence and prohibitory legislation.

RESULTS OF PROHIBITION.

All the prohibitory measures, so far tried, have been of a partial character. Laws have been enacted prohibiting the selling of liquor at certain times, in certain places, in certain quantities, by certain people, and to certain people. These measures have done some good, but their usefulness has been limited by the defective nature of the prohibition imposed, and by the consequent difficulties found in enforcing them. Public opinion has, however, been steadily growing, and expressing itself more and more in a demand for the more comprehensive measure of the total prohibition of the manufacture, importation and sale of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes.

This total prohibition is the one legislative method of dealing with the drink evil that has not yet been tried. The most sweeping legislation that has yet been put into operation has had some loopholes of permission for the traffic to continue in some form. The prohibitory law of Maine does not interfere with the free importation of intoxicants from adjoining states. The Canada temperance act has the same defect, and also permits manufacture and wholesale for consumption outside the territory under prohibition. It will be readily understood that such measures must be partial failures as far as abolition of the liquor traffic is concerned. It is surprising to find how much good they have accomplished in spite of these hindrances to their effectiveness. One illustration out of many may be cited.

The report of the royal commission shows that in the Province of New Brunswick there are nine counties under the Scott act and five counties under the license law. Tables are given showing the population and the criminal record of these two groups of counties. The group under prohibition had, in 1891, a population of 196,422; the group under license law had a population of 124,841. For the ten years named the total convictions for crime in the prohibition counties were 8,738, and for drunkenness alone 4,986. The convictions in the license counties were 14,102 for all crimes, and 8,612 for drunkenness. In other words, the 61 per cent of the population being under prohibition had 39 per cent of all the crime, and 37 per cent of all the drunkenness, while 39 per cent of the population being under license had 61 per cent of all the crime, and 63 per cent of all the drunkenness. Other examples equally forcible might be given.

WHY A PLEBISCITE?

If partial prohibition lessens drunkenness, it is certainly reasonable to argue that total prohibition would be still more effective. This was readily recognized, and led to still more strenuous demands for a thorough-going law. The question has been considered many times by parliament and legislatures. Practical efforts to secure legislation have been, to some extent, impeded at different times by disputes as to whether the right to prohibit belongs to the Dominion, or to the respective provinces, or to both. Judicial decisions have, however, made it clear that whatever authority legislatures possess, the national parliament has power to enact total prohibition for the whole Dominion. The House of Commons has declared that such action would be the most "effective remedy for the evils of intemperance," and has avowed its determination to act in accordance with this declaration as soon as public opinion is prepared to sustain stringent measures. Now, parliament asks the people to whether or not such a law is to be enacted. This is the meaning of the plebiscite to be taken on Sept. 29.

The importance of the situation will be readily recognized. The moral sentiment of Canada is undoubtedly in favor of prohibition. The government and parliament asks for a demonstration of the strength of that sentiment. The people are asked to give a direct instruction to the legislators. If the electorate responds so as to make it clear that a majority of the people are in favor of prohibition, the enactment of a prohibitory law will follow. If the vote shows that public opinion does not yet favor this comprehensive measure, then national legislation prohibiting the liquor traffic will be postponed. The agitation must go on, the blight of intemperance must remain, until there has been further development of an opinion and a principle that are certain to triumph in the end.

THE ANTIS' CASE.

Against the prohibitory movement are arrayed the selfish interests of those who are being enriched by their connection with the liquor traffic, and those who fear that a rigid law would interfere with their personal gratification. They do not state that these are the reasons for their opposition. They present certain plausible arguments in favor of continuing the present system. Most of these arguments have in them a measure of truth, and so have force with persons who do not perceive that they are largely exaggerations, and that the disadvantages that prohibition would entail upon some people are insignificant compared to the tremendous injury which the liquor traffic does to so many.

Among the most frequently used of these arguments are the statements that prohibition would unduly interfere with personal liberty, that it would seriously impair our national revenue, that it could not be thoroughly enforced, and that the temptation of the permitted liquor traffic is indirectly useful in strengthening the moral character of the community.

It is true that prohibition takes away the liberty that a few men now enjoy to sell liquor, and indirectly affects the liberty of those who desire to indulge in intoxicants. Nearly every custom and law of civilization, however, similarly affects the liberty of some for the benefit of the many. Our lives are hedged in by just such divine and human laws, preventing our taking certain courses of action that we might prefer, because such action would interfere with the rights or happiness of others. The result of all these restrictions is fuller liberty, for all in what is best, fuller enjoyment by all of privileges that otherwise would be monopolized by a few. Prohibition is in the line of the civilizing principle of overcoming selfishness by wise legislation for the benefit of all.

It is also true that prohibition would affect the revenue. The liquor-sellers are, in a certain sense, tax collectors. They take from the people annually about $40,000,000. About $7,000,000 of this sum reaches the public treasury, the balance of $33,000,000 is the commission of these collectors, who claim that they help the revenue. They simply impose upon the community a tax six times as great as the community would have to pay if the liquor traffic were abolished, and this extra revenue collected through other channels. It is true that those who now abstain from liquor would pay a share of the $7,000,000. They are willing to do this. They object to a system that means special taxation, heavy taxation, wrung out of the misery of suffering wives and starving children. Moreover, the liquor evil involves other vast outlays that taxpayers have to meet, but which enforced prohibition would relieve them from paying. Statesmen, philanthropists and financiers agree in denouncing the liquor traffic as a financial curse to the community.

A good deal of difficulty would no doubt be found in enforcing a law of total prohibition. There would be law defiance and law evasion. This is the case with nearly all laws, especially so in reference to license laws, which are continually violated. Yet these laws do good. All legislation would be deemed a failure if it was considered that failure meant falling short of totally abolishing the evil prohibited. It is wrong to test the value of prohibition legislation by considering whether or not there would be liquor-selling where it was in force. If prohibition succeeded in suppressing the liquor traffic to such an extent as to materially diminish intemperance, then it would be a success. A little thought will convince any one that a law that entirely prohibts an evil can be more easily enforced than a law that partly prohibits. It is proposed to replace license by prohibition. Facts already quoted show that even partial prohibition has done good, and the conclusion is that better prohibition would produce still better results.

A few of the apologists for the liquor traffic argues that this traffic furnishes a temptation, resistance to which tends to develop moral character. It is scarcely worth while taking time to deal with this sophistry. The liquor traffic successfuly tempts thousands of men, entailing fearful misery, not only upon the tempted, but upon the innocent and weak who have not yielded to the inducement to do wrong. The intemperance of some bring sore sorrow to many. How absurd it is to propose that we should continue to sacrifice the weak and to blast young lives with a ruin from which they cannot escape, defending the outrage by arguing that the temptation has benefited some. There is evil enough in the world to fight, without the community and the parliament joining in the devilish work of providing inducements to crime and disaster and sin.

These anti-temperance arguments have been refuted over and over again. They are not the real reasons why prohibition is opposed. They are the sophistries by which the liquor traffickers hope to induce right-principled but short-sighted people to support the ruinous system out of which these traffickers are building up colossal fortunes for themselves.

A BITTER FIGHT.

There is an idea abroad that the liquor traffic will not make much effort in the present campaign. This is a serious mistake. The liquor traffic will do all that can help its cause. Its campaign work is going on already. A firm of wealthy distillers has sent a circular to charitable organizations saying that its contributios for benevolent purposes must be discontinued this year in order that the money may be available for the coming fight. Circulars have been sent to newspapers all over Ontario, asking them to name the price at which they would sell their space for use by agents of the liquor party. It may be that there will be little platform opposition to prohibition. Such campaigning generally results in benefit to the temperance side, as open discussion favors the truth. It would be in the interests of the liquor traffic to have a small vote polled. Prohibitionists desire to have as full an expression of the actual opinion of the people as can possibly be secured. The liquor traffic will probably fight quietly, but it will fight hard.

A DANGER.

The danger of the situation is in the possibility of indifference on the part of the electors favorable to prohibition. A full vote would mean an overwhelming majority against the liquor traffic. The friends of temperance have not, however, control of money to employ agents, to hire conveyances, and to perfect the elaborate machinery that political parties bring into play at elections, even if they were disposed to adopt this method. Their opponents would be wiling to sacrifice large amounts to defeat prohibition, and are well able to provide any desired amount of money. The rank and file of the voters favorable to prohibition must make more than their usual voluntary electoral efforts, in order to secure a fair expression of their views through the ballot box.

The end to be obtained is worthy of such an effort. Notwithstanding the progress that has been made, the evil of intemperance is still working fearful havoc in our land. There is hardly a home that has not suffered in some way from the curse. Thousands of worse than widowed wives, thousands of worse than orphan children, thousands of blasted homes and broken hearts testify to the cruel tyranny of this nineteenth century despot. Christian civilization is the working out of the grand gospel truth of the responsibility of every man for the welfare of his fellows. It is meeting in a desperate conflict the sordid, grasping selfishness that really appertains to the heathen barbarisms of bygone days. The result will depend upon the zeal and activity of those who are professed adherents of the gospel truth. An earnest appeal is made to every man who has a vote, to every woman who has influence, to every Christian who seeks the triumph of benevolence and justice. Trusting in God and doing all your duty, go into this good fight with heart and soul and mind and strength, and above all, "Let every vote be polled."

AGAINST

Prof. Goldwin Smith Argues That It Will Do More Harm Than Good to Public Morality.

To the Editor of the Toronto Sun:

Sir,—The issue of prohibition is now fairly before us, and surely we may discuss it as fellow-citizens having the same end in view, without disparagement to each other's character and motives. The policy of prohibition is questioned not only by the liquor interest, but by a great body of people totally unconnected with that interest, friends of temperance and temperate themselves, who are opposed to prohibition because they sincerely believe that besides trenching on personal liberty it fails of its object and always has done, and is likely always to do, more harm than good to public morality.

Drunkenness we all abhor and despise. On that subject opinion, which formerly was unsound, is now perfectly sound. It constitutes a social law really more powerful, more certain in its operation, surer in the infliction of its penalties, than laws written on the statute book and enforced by the police. The man who is known to be a drunkard is socially and industrially under a ban. Nobody is willing to employ him; he forfeits his chances of marriage; the insurance office shuns him; disgrace and poverty are his lot. It used to be far otherwise. Excess in liquor was once almost a part of hospitality. But it is not so now. This very temperance movement is a proof of the strength of feeling on the question which makes itself felt in all departments and relations of life.

IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE.

Where prohibition has been tried what has been the practical result? We have a right to ask this when we are called upon to make what all admit to be a very costly as well as a very critical experiment. We should have to sacrifice seven millions of revenue. We should have to kill the capital invested in the trade, amounting, it seems, to fifty millions. We should have to throw out of work thousands of people directly or indirectly earning their bread by the business. We should seriously have to injure the growers of barley, cider apples and grapes. If we admitted, as in justice we can hardly fail to admit, a claim for compensation, another large item would be added to account of loss. We should have to pay for the additional police necessary to guard our immense frontier, and to coerce the less settled sections of the population, such as the mining adventurers of the west. We might possibly have to coerce Quebec. We should further imperil the interests of our country by proclaiming it to be under an ecclesiastical and ascetic rule, which many, rightly or wrongly, abhor. Without setting material loss against moral gain, we are entitled to proof, before incurring so great a material loss, that we are sure of the moral gain. Prohibitionists themselves, regardless as they may be of worldly interests compared with the principle, would not wish to see the cause of temperance saddled with the memory of a ruinous failure.

We all, it may be presumed, prefer liberty and the virtue which is freely formed. Temperance in its proper sense is self-restraint, and would cease to exist if abstinence were enforced by law. However, in desperate cases, desperate remedies must be applied. But is the case of Canada desperate? Is Canada a drunken country? Is it not, on the contrary, temperate, and increasingly so? Have not education, religion and the teachings of medical science been doing their work? Prof. Blaikie thought he was scoring a point for prohibition by complimenting Toronto on the freedom of its streets from drunkenness. But Toronto was not under the Scott Act.

There have been false alarms. A temperance lecturer once said that there were 10,000 deaths in Canada annually from alcohol. Ten thousand would be more than half the male adult deaths in the Dominion. Even three thousand or four thousand deaths from alcohol, the estimates of the Hon. George E. Foster and the Hon. G. W. Ross respectively, must be very far beyond the mark.

THE SCOTT ACT

We have tried prohibition in the form of the Scott Act. County after county adopted the act; county after county repealed it by majorities larger than those by which it had been passed, finding, as there was a large body of evidence to show, that while the act stopped social conviviality, it increased secret indulgence; that it led to contraband traffic in liquor, to contempt of the law, to perjury, to the evils of the spy system, to disturbance of neighborly peace and good will. Here was a genuine popular verdict founded on a practical trial of the system. Nor was it really reversed by the subsequent provincial plebiscite in favor of prohibition carried by a majority in the proportion of 19 to 11, while only 58 per cent of the vote was polled, and the balance might safely be set down as in the main opposed or indifferent. The enactment and the repeal of the Scott Act were legislation, approached by the voter with a full sense of responsibility. The plebiscite was not legislation; it was a mere fancy vote.

It may be said that the Scott Act was local, and that the area was not large enough to keep off contagion. But would the area of Canada be large enough to keep off contagion? Would not the taste be revived in every Canadian who crossed the line or went to England? Popular literature, such as works of Dickens, is full of the convivial use of liquor, and its influence, no law could annul. There would be little hope therefore of eradicating the desire in the long line of provinces stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

It is said that the repeal of the Scott Act was followed by an increase in drunkenness. This is not unlikely. Overstraining is naturally followed by a recoil. Puritan over-strictness was avenged by the outburst of licentiousness in the reign of Charles II.

ACROSS THE BORDER.

Massachusetts, the model state of the union, tried prohibition for a series of years, and gave it up, finding that the closing of the public places of sale multiplied the secret places; that more liquor and worse liquor was drunk, and that there was more drunkenness in Boston than ever. "The mere fact," says the report, "that the law seeks to prevent them from drinking, rouses the determination to drink in many. The fact that the place is secret takes away the restraint which in more public and respectable places would keep them within temperate bounds. The fact that the business is contraband and liable to interruption, and that its gains are hazardous, tends to drive honest men from it and leave it under the control of dishonest men, who will not scruple to poison the community with vile adulteration."

Vermont, a rural state, without slums tried prohibition for 40 years, piled one repressive enactment upon another, heaped up penalties, gave the police power to enter any house without a warrant. The result as stated by Mr. Edward Johnston in the Popular Science Monthly for May, 1884, was that for all practical purposes the law was a dead letter. There were dramshops in the principal streets and no concealment of the illegal traffic. Nobody dreamed of enforcing the law as the laws against burglary and larceny are enforced. Perjury and subornation of perjury, disregard and contempt of all law were practically fostered and encouraged.

In Iowa a correspondent of Harper's Weekly reported that prohibition in the cities meant free liquor. A correspondent of the New York Nation confirmed the statement. Dr. Dio Lewis, in places where he had been assured that drink could not be had for love or money, saw drunkards reeling in the streets. In Iowa City he saw from 75 to 100 kegs of beer delivered on trucks. The business directory of Dubuque, a city of 35,000 inhabitants, comprised two breweries, 35 hotels, 10 wholesale liquor places, and 181 saloons. Formal prosecutions were a mere mode of raising a tax. Druggists' shops were turned into liquor shops, with a few drugs in the window.

In Kansas, the state of Governor St. John, the chosen chief of prohibition, where the most stringent prohibition had been enacted, the result, according to Dr. Gardiner, was that the drug stores were little more than rum shops, and that their number was astonishing. In one town of 4,000 people, 15 of them were counted on the main street. Leavenworth, with a population of 23,000, had 175 places where liquor was sold. In Kansas City the police collected in 1882 $45,000 in fines for illegal sale of liquor. There is a general tendency to convert prohibition, where it prevails, practically into license by taking the fees under the guise of fines. In Tongawoxie, a small town in Kansas, where there was no saloon before prohibition, there were three or four afterwards. This is against the theory that prohibition works well in small places, though in large cities it works ill. At Topeka, in Kansas, there are no saloons. But there were none when prohibition was introduced, popular feeling being against them. A proof that it is popular feeling that is strong, rather than prohibitive law.

IN MAINE.

Maine is the banner state of prohibition. It had been trying the system for nearly half a century, time enough to kill the liquor traffic, if the liquor traffic was to be killed. Yet "Gail Hamilton," who knew the state well, said in the North American Review: "The actual result is that liquor is sold to all who wish to obtain it, in nearly every town in the state. Enforcement of the law seems to have little effect. For the past six years the city of Bangor has practically enjoyed free rum. In more than 100 places liquor is sold, and no attempt has been made to enforce the law. In Bath, Lewiston, Augusta and other cities no real difficulty is experienced in procuring liquor. In Portland enforcement of the law has been faithfully attempted, yet the liquor traffic flourishes for all classes, from the highest to the lowest. . . . In a journey last summer for hundreds of miles through the cities and through the scattered villages and hamlets of Maine, the almost universal testimony was 'you' get liquor enough for bad purposes in bad places, but you cannot get it for good purposes in good places.'" "What works against prohibition," the writer added, "is that in the opinion of many of the most earnest total abstinence men the original Maine law state, after 30 years of prohibition is no more a temperance state than it was before prohibition was introduced." It appears that upwards of 1,000 people in the state paid United States retail liquor tax, though Archdeacon Farrar was informed that the trade had been completely driven out of sight. With these acounts the general results and most recent inquiries appear to correspond.

NEAL DOW.

General Neal Dow himself, upbraiding his former party for its slackness in the cause, complained of the number of low drinking places infesting the cities of Maine. The New York Sun, after investigation carried on through its correspondent, said: "The actual state of affairs in Maine is perfectly well understood by every Maine man with eyes in his head, and by every observant visitor to Maine. In no part of the world is the spectacle of drunken men reeling along the streets more common than in the cities and larger towns of Maine. Nowhere in the world is the average quality of the liquor sold so bad; and consequently so dangerous to the health of the consumer and the peace of the public. The facilities for obtaining liquor vary in different parts of the state, from the cities where fancy drinks are openly compounded, and sold over rosewood bars, to the places where it is dispensed by the swig from flat bottles carried around in the breeches pockets of perambulating dealers. But liquor, good or bad, can be bought anywhere." Perjury, the Sun correspondent also stated, as usual, was rife. In the cities of Maine, though the law had been 46 times amended to sharpen its teeth, liquor, generally of a bad kind, was freely, though clandestinely, sold. "Pocket peddling" was rife, and pressid the temptation on the young. The city of Bangor had openly taken itself out of the law, and established a liquor system of its own. In Portland the city government sold liquor nominally for medicine, but really also as a beverage, and the agency was a scene of falsehood, jobbery and corruption. The corruption of the city officers was an almost inevitable and a serious consequence of the system. Some of those who had administered the law in Maine were among the stronges advocates of repeal, and of a return to the license system. They tried to give effect to the law. They fined, they imprisoned, they perhaps ruined one set of liquor dealers, and the only result was that a worse set succeeded.

It is said that in Maine the abuse is confined to the mixed population of cities, especially the seaports, and that in the rural districts the law is successful. It is apparently successful in the rural districts because there people are temperate of their own accord. It fails where coercion is needed.

I interviewed Neal Dow, the venerable patriarch of prohibition. It may have been a casual mood, but he seemed to me to be disappointed and someone embittered. The wife of a man imprisoned for liquor selling had sold some liquor, which was left in her house, to buy bread. Neal Dow spoke of her offense and of the punishment which she merited in very extreme terms. Moral crusades have done much for us. But moral crusaders are apt in their zeal to overstep the limits of justice. The Scott Act set up arbitrary tribunals, forced a man to criminate himself, compelled husband and wife to break the marriage vow by testifying against each other. The practice of forcing the consciences of candidates at elections is not consistent with public morality, or with true loyalty to the commonwealth, whose general interests it disregards. Traders in liquor are treated as assassins, and put out of the pale of justice, though they have been specially recognized by the state, which has received their license fees.

Some years ago 70 or 80 taverns were suddenly closed in Toronto. The keepers of the taverns could not starve. They sold liquor secretly, and the result was an unusually drunken Christmas. The tavern door, when you have closed it by law, ceases to tempt; but the illegal seller may be a more active tempter.

In all these cases the law, no doubt has its friends. It could not otherwise have been passed, and its friends naturally give a favorable account of its operation. Much evidence of that kind was given to the Canadian commissioners, and has formed the basis of a minority report. But, making the fairest allowance for this, and supposing the evidence to be balanced, it is surely impossible to say that in any case there is such practical proof of the success of prohibition as would warrant us in encountering all the cost and risks of a sweeping measure for the whole Dominion. Improvement which was really spontaneous may sometimes have been credited to law.

IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

Evidence of the evil of drunkenness, though largely given, is not to the point. The evils of drunkenness nobody disputes. The question is only as to the practicability and efficacy of the remedy now proposed.

Imposing statistics are brought to prove a connection between drinking and crime; and it is inferred that if you stop drinking, crime will cease. Is there not a fallacy here? In most cases is it drinking that is the parent of crime, or is it not rather depravity of nature, inherited or induced by circumstances, that is the parent of both? Besides, criminals have learned the trick of pleading drink as the origin and excuse of their crimes. There is no absence of crime in Turkey, where the Koran prohibits drink, or in Spain, which is noted for temperance. We are also told that drunkenness is the great source of poverty. That drunkenness, where it exists, is a source of poverty cannot be questioned. But the sources of poverty are countless, including fluctuations of industry, decline in the value of products and other economical causes, as well as personal infirmities, disease and mere idleness and thriftlessness, which are often found apart from addiction to drink. The poverty of the millions in Hindoostan has not its source in drink.

That the moderate use of liquor must lead to excess is an assumption at variance with facts. English gentlemen use wine daily, and abhor drunkenness. Millions and tens of millions in other countries do the same. In Spain, we are told, everybody drinks a little wine, yet a drunken man is almost a prodigy. Croker, in his "Travels in Spain," says: "The habitual temperance of these people is really astonishing; I never saw a Spaniard drink a second glass of wine." Another English tourist says: "In all our wanderings through town and country, along the highways and byways of the land, from Bayonne to Gibraltar, we never saw more than four men who were the least intoxicated." Mr. Bryant, the American author, has confirmed this account.

MODERATE DRINKING.

Nothing can be better proved than that to carry into effect laws of this kind in a free country you must have the conscience of the people thoroughly and actively with you. Men may vote for prohibition from general hatred of intemperance; perhaps under ministerial or personal influence; but will their conviction be strong enough to make them join heartily in giving effect to the law? They would do their best to bring a murderer or a thief to justice. Will they do their best to throw into jail and ruin a neighbor, otherwise harmless, perhaps a friend or acquaintance, for selling or drinking a glass of whisky or ale? Will they not be apt, even if they are abstiners themselves, rather to help him to get off? The people do wrong in breaking or evading the law, but the legislator does wrong in making a law which the people are sure to break.

No fair-minded prohibitionist can think that the use of fermented liquors is so clearly immoral that in suppressing it the consciences of all men will be with you. Christ undoubtedly used wine; His apostles used it; He made it an element in His most sacred ordinance forever. An overwhelming majority of mankind still use fermented liquors. The taste is co-extensive and co-eval with humanity. In the earliest mythologies there are gods of wine. The great prohibitionist, Archdeacon Farrar, most positively disclaims the belief that the moderate use of liquor is criminal. Mr. Gladstone is known to have used wine.

Nor can you reasonably say that all fermented liquor is poison when you see moderate drinkers living to a hundred, and find moderate use still prescribed by eminent physicians. You may think, possibly with reason, that whisky or beer is unwholesome; though the constitutions of men may differ in that respect. But mere opinion that an article of diet is unwholesome, especially when the opinion is so far from being universal, is not a sufficient ground for the interference of the law. Behind this agitation for the prohibition of drink begins to loom an agitation for the prohibition of tobacco. If the experts of medical science would pronounce unanimously, or with any appearance to unanimity, that the moderate use of liquor necessarily generated disease, and shortened life, the effect would presently be seen.

Those who sincerely believe that such laws are tyrannical misuses of political power, in resisting as far as they lawfully could the application of the measure, would be acting no less conscientiously than those who were striving to put it in force.

Prohibition discriminates against the lighter drinks, such as wine, beer and cider, and in favor of whisky, because the bulk of whisky being less, it is more easily smuggled, while its clandestine manufacture is more easily concealed. Besides there are other intoxicants, such as opium and chloral, the use of which would be likely to increase when liquor was withdrawn.

Legal prohibition kills voluntary efforts such as that of the Band of Hope or the Good Templars, which have done so much to diminish drinking. It is believed that this effect is already felt in advance, and that it accounts for a slight increase of intemperance in some places. Nor if coercion fails, will organization for voluntary effort be easily revived.

Everybody admits that the liquor trade has its special dangers, and stands in special need of legislative supervision and control. These may be applied to any extent, and in any form which may seem expedient, so long as the trade is in recognized and responsible hands. When the trade becomes contraband all regulation is practically at an end.

GOLDWIN SMITH,
Former President of the Liberal Temperance Union.