

intemperance continued and increased. New and more stringent, and, perhaps, more judicious license laws were passed from time to time until the year 1787, when a new law was passed by the then recently formed States Government. This law of 1787 with some amendments, which did not change radically its general character, remained a law of the State until the year 1832. The frightful increase of intemperance during the quarter of a century which elapsed between the passage of the license law of 1787, and the organization of the first society in the State for the express purpose of promoting temperance would seem to furnish pretty conclusive evidence that the legalizing of the cause of intemperance is not the best or most effectual means of suppressing the evil.

In the year 1816 a law was passed, for the first time, in this State, and limited at first in operation to the city of Boston, but afterwards extended to all parts of the commonwealth. This law authorized the granting of licenses to common victuallers, with the right to sell intoxicating liquors, as the petitioners ask that it may now be done. And contemporary history will satisfy any honest student that that law was one of the most fruitful sources of crime and vice that ever existed in this commonwealth.

By an Act of the year 1832, county commissioners, as it was then understood, were required to license innholders and others, to a certain extent, with the right to sell intoxicating liquors, and yet the rising flood of intemperance was not stayed. By a law of 1837 the county commissioners were at liberty to grant or withhold licenses as they might judge the public good required. And in six counties in the commonwealth they did refuse, for several years, to grant any licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors, as beverages. From that time an opportunity was offered to the people of contrasting the benefits and evils of the two opposing theories of license and prohibition in adjoining counties; and in course of a few years, and in the progress of events, and the discussions and investigations which are carried on during these years touching these subjects, the whole commonwealth came at length in 1852 to adopt the prohibitory theory, and have adhered to it steadily from that time to the present. And we are not left to be guided by the light of our own experience alone upon this subject; for if we extend our observations to other and neighbouring States, and to other countries, we shall find the history of license laws authorizing the traffic in intoxicating liquors to be uniform, and shall be taught their utter inefficiency as reformatory measures, or as restraining the unlawful traffic. Hon. Lucius Child, one of the counsel who appeared before the Committee for the petitioners in the year 1838, being then a member of the Legislature, and as a member of one of the Committees, discussing the effect of a license law, uses this significant language: "It may well be doubted whether intemperance would have increased with more rapid strides if no legislative regulation of the sale of intoxicating liquors had ever been made."

Nothing has occurred during the last thirty years in the history or experience of States or communities, where license laws have prevailed, to lead us to revise the