

SHOULD WE TO HAVE A PROHIBITORY LIQUOR LAW?

THE general conviction on the minds of many who wish well to the cause of sobriety—a conviction gathering strength from the experience of the past—is, that if we would be delivered speedily from the long train of evils connected with Intemperance, the strong arm of the law must interfere, to protect us from what I am safe in calling, the greatest curse that afflicts humanity. We must demand of our Legislature that they will abate a proved and public nuisance; that they will assist in putting down what is itself a national crime, and the source of innumerable other crimes and calamities; and that Government shall cease to give protection and encouragement to those who are now preying upon the vitals of the social system, upon the terms of receiving a share of the plunder in the form of revenue.

We are met, at the outset, by some well-intentioned persons, who say: "We are opposed to everything but *moral suasion*, in this work, and have full faith in its efficacy." There can be no doubt that on the principle of voluntary association and individual effort to promote Temperance, immense results have been accomplished. Thousands of drunkards have been snatched from the very brink of the pit. From many a desolated home the demon has been expelled; while peace, plenty, and happiness spread a joyous influence over the domestic circle. Tens of thousands have been kept, by prevention, from the grasp of the malignant fiend. Nor does my position imply that personal and combined effort, in the way of moral suasion, shall cease. We will go all lengths with the objector in appealing to men's moral sentiments—to their sense of right and wrong. We will reason with, warn, and pray for those who have fallen into the snare. But we feel bound, besides this, to do our best to outlaw a great and acknowledged wrong, and to shield society from one of the most infernal systems that has ever wrung the heart-strings, debauched the morals, killed the bodies, or blighted the souls of our fellowmen. I will tell you why I think this is necessary to our success:

The Drunkard is usually weak in Moral Principle. He was not always so. There was a time when his domestic affections were pure and ardent; and when, in his intercourse with his fellows, his word was as good as his bond. It is not so now. That delicate perception of right and wrong, and that high sense of honor which once characterized him, have been destroyed by evil habit—or, at least, what is left of them is no match for the burning thirst that is consuming him. The vitiated appetite of the drunkard is stronger than the sense of right; stronger than a regard for health, or desire for happiness; stronger than the feeling of self-respect; stronger than all the laws of God and man; stronger even than the fear of future wrath. Jeremiah declares such a habit to be as indelible as the spots of the leopard, or the dark hue of the Ethiopian. How many of earth's brightest sons have sunk down, under its thrall, into irretrievable ruin! How many,