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RANDOM REFLECTIONS.

IN continuing the discussion of the question of taxation we would notice collections from excise and licences, and coming to the consideration of this phase of the question we would go back to first principles. The functions of government should be exercised for the protection and encouragement of well doing and well being. If a man be found doing that which is right; if an industry be productive of that which ministers to man's comfort of body or mind, which raises him in moral character, in mental or physical development and capacity, the first and greatest duty and interest of the community—of the will of which the law should be but an executive expression—is to extend to that man or that industry the fullest protection and encouragement that is consistent with the rights of every other man or industry; and this being true, it follows that if a man be found doing that which is wrong; if an industry produces that which lessens or destroys man's comfort of body or mind, which lowers him in moral character, in mental or physical capacity, which prevents him or those dependent on him from rising to the highest of culture or of usefulness of which he or they are capable, which degrades mentally, morally or physically, it is the duty and interest of the community and of every individual in it to discourage or prevent the man or the industry, and failing in this, to place upon those profiting by the wrong or the industry responsibility for its consequences.

In Canada, as in every English-speaking country, a very great part of the entire revenues of government are

levied upon the manufacture of intoxicating liquors and tobacco and the sale of intoxicants. This is wrong, and only wrong in principle and hurtful in practice in that it sets up—as do customs dues—a standard of justice not in accord with man's conscience or ethical law, making that right withheld, it rests upon the assumption that the law may rightfully interfere with individual liberty or enterprise without reference to its character or effects, to which the sanction of law is extended or that wrong from which it is withheld, it rests upon the assumption that the law may rightfully interfere with individual liberty or enterprise without reference to whether that liberty is used for a good or bad purpose, or the industry be a blessing or a curse. Our present excise laws exist and are enforced largely in deference to the demands of a section of the community who believe and teach that the manufacture and sale of intoxicants and tobacco are a curse and a blight on our civilisation, and while so existing, if their contention be founded on truth, the law is a fraud and a delusion, producing effects very far different to what they intend. If it be right before God's law to make and sell these things, no human enactment can make it wrong. And if it be wrong in itself, it is beyond the power of any law under heaven to make it right or to give to such an occupation the respectability that attaches to well-doing, and the law in extending its protection to these things but degrades itself to the position of an entrenchment behind which the powers of evil may shelter themselves, and trades off the respect it should receive at the hands of all good men for a share in the proceeds of evil. And the defence offered by the majority of the advocates of our excise and licence law is its clearest condemnation. They unblushingly contend that if it be an evil it is a necessary evil, that the proceeds accruing from it form so important a part of the revenues of the country that they cannot be discontinued without impairing the efficiency of the agencies for the enforcement of law and order. This assumption but proves the truth of the proverb "that a lie has no legs." It rests upon and is connected with a number of fallacies of which it is but the outcome—that evil agencies may produce good results; that right and truth and well-doing are not able to stand of them-

selves, but must have the help of evil to furnish the means that must carry them into effect; that evil can never be overcome, but must ever be consistent with good; that our civilisation cannot maintain or advance without the ruthless sacrifice of a portion of the community. Like all advocates of expediency, rather than justice, those who advance this argument land in a quagmire where there is no standing ground, and where effort to extricate only tends to sink them deeper in the slums of error and deceit. And the effects of our excise and license laws on the evils they are intended to regulate or cure are such as might be expected from trying to make better one evil by the application of another.

The writer of this article can remember when excise duties were in their infancy in Canada. In those days whiskey cost less per gallon than it now does per pint; grain cost as much then as now. Improvements in manufacture cheapened the cost of making, but with the increase of imposts came an increase in price and a deterioration in quality—the higher the excise on the making and the price paid for the privilege of selling, the greater the inducement to fraud by adulteration. While the cheap whiskeys of 35 years ago in Canada were pure or only diluted with water, the whiskeys of to-day have come to be known, even to those who habitually use them, by the euphemious names of "rot gut" and "forty rod." Now, whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the good or evil effects of the manufacture and sale of intoxicants, there can be only one opinion as to the substitution of poisons for pure liquors, and the law that tends to produce this effect, whatever its objects, is a failure. For a future issue we leave the continued discussion of this part of the question.

In passing Jackson & Mylius' store window one is fairly dazzled with the display of diamonds, they having added over \$6,000 worth of these precious stones to their already fine stock, during the past week.

Sad indeed was the funeral yesterday of the man who remarked that the glaziers were putty decent fellows.