

Prohibition in the Faroe Islands

The Faroe Islands are an interesting group lying to the north of Scotland, nearly midway between Iceland and the Shetland Islands. They belong to Denmark and have a population of about 20,000. The people are mainly fishermen, and are not wealthy, yet they have suffered from the liquor traffic because of certain conditions which are described by Mr. William Durban in *The Alliance News* as follows:

Every summer about 2,000 stalwart young men leave the ports for the great cod-fishing expedition. There are 150 fishing sloops in the Faroe fleet, fine craft, all purchased at Grimsby. Now, these Faroese in all the islands are naturally a temperate race, excepting at certain festive seasons during the year. The two chief of these occasions happen in the spring, when the fishing fleet sail and the 2,000 young fellows depart, and in the autumn, when the fleet returns. Always, till recent prohibition wrought an almost miraculous change, terrible drunkenness disgraced the two periods. And many a character was thus demoralized for life.

No More Brandy Shops

These facts led the people of the Faroe Islands to determine to rid themselves of the peril. They have self-government and therefore were able to do this, with the result set out in the following interview, which Mr. Durban publishes as given to him by Pastor Arthur Brend, an evangelist who carries on missionary work among these Northern people. Here is his statement:

I will now tell the Prohibition story by repeating Mr. Brend's talk to me on the topic. "The difference now is most marked," said he. "We no longer witness the blasphemous drinking orgies that were provoked on exciting occasions simply by the facilities for purchasing intoxicants. The prohibition now in force is absolutely genuine. It is no use to say that prohibition cannot prohibit, for if any

student of the problem wants to see that prohibition can and does prohibit, just send him to the Faroes. The drink trade as a trade is utterly hatched. Last year, after much agitation and discussion during recent years, the people voluntarily and by an overwhelming majority voted for the adoption of the Local Veto. And on January 1 this year the enactment came into force which establishes prohibition throughout the whole group. Let me note that both sexes have the vote, so the women have had much to do with bringing about this result."

"Is there not evasion in any way?" I asked.

Effectiveness of Prohibition

"Hardly. For a merchant is not allowed to practise treating. He may not give it to customers. He must not take a customer home and there give him drink. The new law is rigid concerning this. The Act was passed by the Ting, or Island Parliament, by a unanimous vote, in consequence of the overwhelming Local Veto vote throughout the islands. The Act is to remain in force for five years. Then there will be voting again. There were, of course, many shops that sold beer and spirits and wine, but not one in all the Faroes now deals in such commodities. Let me explain that no shop ever dealt only in drink. Every shop is a general store. I am glad to say that no grievance is made of the new system. The vote was so overwhelming, as I have said, that no trader could dare to complain. Of all the voters, only about three per cent. voted for drink. Let me just say that the people of the Faroes are prosperous and contented.

"But life in the Faroes has many perils. Every season many have been drowned from their own boats in our tremendous and dangerous tides. And the cliff work demands a steady head. Strong drink is an enemy that could not be tolerated, and the people became convinced that they must deal drastically with the evil. I do not for one moment believe that the islanders will want to resume the drink trade again."