

Prohibition on the other hand is not a principle, it is simply an expediency. Frequently expediency becomes the basis of law, and if the expediency be great the law may have a measure of enforcement, but even at best this enforcement will be costly, difficult and unsatisfactory. For instance the snow cleaning by-law of Toronto requires that every citizen shall clean the snow away from the sidewalk in front of his premises. A greater expediency than this, both for comfort and safety, and more just in the means adapted to attain the end could not well be conceived. Yet the law was not obeyed. The most stringent efforts at enforcement were adopted, hundreds of citizens were summoned to the police court and fined, but without success, and latterly the city has hit upon the scheme of doing the neglected work with corporation laborers and charging the cost in the tax bills. I give this as an example of the difference found between enforcing laws based upon principle and those based upon expediency.

Prohibition is an expediency. But a great many people deny the expediency. Never mind now whether they are in the majority or minority, it will not be controverted that a great many, a very very large number of persons, utterly deny that such a law is necessary, is expedient, or founded on any tenable claim of justice. The Prohibitionist says drinking produces drunkenness, drinking therefore is an evil, ergo, drinking should be stopped, we will pass a law to stop it. These other people promptly deny both the premises and the conclusion. They say drinking may produce drunkenness, but in the case of ninety-eight per cent. of those who use liquor it does not, drinking in itself is not evil though excess in this, as in anything else, will produce evil, therefore not being in itself evil it should not be stopped or prohibited by law, and no law you may pass shall or can stop its use because the law in itself will be an injustice. Between these two classes there is the large mass of quite moderate drinking citizens, who do not ally themselves with the liquor interest and look with contempt upon the Prohibitionists, who do not vote when Prohibition is made an issue, but who have their rights, know what they are and propose to keep them. These men believe that personal liberty is an eternal principle of justice and they do not believe that in defence of that principle they should be compelled to chase up and down the country after the defeated "Govs.," the irreverent "Revs.," the perambulating "Cols.," the bogus "Profs.," and the dishonorable "Hons.," whose zeal in the cause of alleged temperance is only equalled by their yearning desire for the silver collection at the door, but they are the men who defeat every political party that takes up and attempts to enforce Prohibition.

Here then we have a law which will have, not the support of the community, but the active opposition of a large part of the people, the passive opposition of many, the passive support of some and the active support of a few. Any citizen will seize a thief or a pickpocket and hand him over to the police, not one in a hundred will give information to convict a liquor seller under Prohibition. A large part of the community will unite in shielding him.

Under these circumstances where then is there possibility of efficient enforcement of such a law? That its supporters do not expect this is evidenced by the fact that they ask for the enforcement of this law powers far beyond anything asked under any other law, powers that degrade the majesty of the law, and deprive the subject of every vestige of civil liberty.

So far I have dealt with the theoretical side. Practically the law is not efficiently enforced in any city, town, village or hamlet I have ever visited where such a law was in force. In some places it is claimed that the law is as well enforced as that against theft, for instance. That this has so often been repeated is my excuse for even speaking of such an absurdity. I certainly would not consider the law against theft efficiently enforced if any number of strangers could step off the train at a town or village, steal each once, twice or thrice or a dozen times, and go away again without even an attempt being made to punish