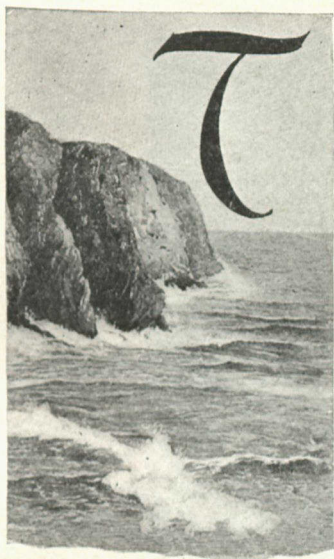


Prohibition as a Problem of Individual and Social Reform.

BY JAMES GIBSON HUME.



THAT it is a large part of the philosopher's work to deal with the commonplace, and to make us more explicitly aware of what we already vaguely know must be my excuse for discussing the threadbare topic of Prohibition, in answer to the request of the editor to write "something on some sociological problem from a philosophical standpoint."

Reform is one of the most familiar conceptions of modern thought, which dates from the Renaissance and the Reformation. Let us, however, pause a moment to note the meaning of "reform" and the nature of the being capable of reform.

The most zealous advocate of "reform" must admit that a large part of the universe is not open to this process. The Highest Being in the universe cannot be reformed, for He is already perfect. The lower spheres of the universe, the mechanical external cosmos cannot be reformed. Changes may be made in inorganic nature, mechanical or chemical; plant life may be modified in various ways; animals may be trained and improved; but only that most cunning animal, man, possesses the capabilities for reform; man alone requires fundamental reformation. Without dwelling on those features of man's nature that make reform desirable, let us first consider what renders it possible. To state it briefly, we may say it is man's conscious possession of a peculiar capability of initiative, or free or voluntary action. Unlike the forces and beings around him, propelled by the conditions of the past inevitably, man may look forward and onward and upward to the future and better. He may look back upon his own past and