

"License a few Respectable Men to Deal it out as it Ought to be, and Stop the rest."

From the Massachusetts Life Boat.

The above opinion is frequently expressed by many honest and well-disposed persons, who think it, upon a superficial view, a system that would work more effectually in lessening the sale of intoxicating drinks, and drunkenness, than any other. But it is very evident that such have not given the subject much thought or reflection, and are but little acquainted with the history of the license system, or they would arrive at very different conclusions. This has ever been the license system of this state, (until repealed by the present law) and extends back under our colonial government a period of more than 200 years; and it is under the workings of this very system, that we have suffered so much from drunkenness and all its attendant evils, and from which we so earnestly desire a deliverance.

Our "Courts of Sessions" in years past, and the County Commissioners and Mayor and Aldermen of later years, have given licenses to "respectable men" "to sell for the public good," and refused the "rest," or those supposed to be disreputable; and what has been the result? The "respectable" have sold all they could, and so have the "rest;" the latter asserting that they have as good right to sell as the licensed, and that their liquor does no more injury than theirs. The consequence has ever been, as every one at all acquainted with the history of the past knows, an unlimited and indiscriminate sale.—The "rest" have never been stopped, nor will they ever be, under this partial and unjust system. It is because the license law is wrong in principle, partial and unequal in its operation—truly "enriching the few at the expense of the many;" and at war with the whole theory of our government, which presumes that any legitimate branch of business should be thrown open to the free competition of all, that it can never successfully operate. If the traffic in intoxicating drinks, as a beverage, is not an evil sufficient to require its prohibition, why should not all be permitted to traffic in it, as well as any other article of merchandise? Why make a monopoly of it, and that too of a most profitable character to the possessor? If on the other hand, it be a great evil, and the direct and indirect cause of a large portion of all the crime, wretchedness and misery which have scourged our country, why should it be licensed at all? It is not the duty of government to license and protect an evil, but to prohibit it. As well might we talk of licensing the slave trade, gambling, brothels, etc. The only just and consistent course of legislation, therefore, is freedom if the traffic is right—prohibition if wrong.

This apparently plausible scheme of licensing a few respectable men, if not fully comprehended by the well-disposed, is well understood by the liquor manufacturers and large dealers. They know the scheme to be an "arrant humbug"—they know well that it has ever resulted, and ever will, from its unequal and monopolizing character, in an unlimited sale; and that is just what they desire. Many of them, particularly the keepers of drinking and tipping shops, would like very well to have the authority of a license to deal out the destructive liquid, in order to give a legal sanction to the traffic, and, as far as possible, a moral one also; that, when implored by some heart-broken wife or mother to sell her husband or son no more, they can plead the authority of the State, under sanction of license to sell for the public good.

Let us for a moment examine the practical working of this pretended limited license system. The Mayor and Aldermen of cities, and the County Commissioners, give notice that they will grant a limited number of licenses "to respectable men," to sell intoxicating drinks, as a beverage, for the public good—the consequence is, that the traffic is now to have the sanction of law, and whatever has that

sanction is presumed to be right; for law is deemed the exponent of morals, and whoever does legally right, does morally right, otherwise the law should stop him. It is no longer a contraband article. Respectable men apply, and their petitions are signed by equally respectable men. Now let us take for example the city of Boston. The Mayor and Aldermen last spring decided to grant a limited number of licenses, and were to "stop the rest." There were about 1200 applicants—about 600 were granted, many more than they intended, "to deal it out as it ought to be," leaving about 600 rejected, many of them as respectable as those who succeeded. Have they acquiesced and relinquished the traffic? No, they continue to sell, asserting that they have as good a moral right as the licensed. The disreputable, (so called) who did not think it worth while to apply for license, sell also, under the same view of their right. The whole number of places where the article is sold, is computed at more than 1600—leaving the "rest," that were to be stopped, at rising 1000. Have the city authorities attempted to stop them, though possessing a strong and vigilant police? On the contrary, they have thrown obstacles in the way, and why? One reason is the partial character of the system; another, that the large liquor dealers, who are among the wealthy and influential of the city, are opposed to stopping them, for they regard the "rest" as good and profitable customers as those "who were to deal it out as it ought to be," and the ruling principle with them being "sale and profit," it is for their interest that all should sell; thus conclusively proving that though they use the language at the head of this article, it is done hypocritically—that their real design is, as we have asserted, an indiscriminate, unlimited sale.

That city now presents a truthful and forcible illustration of the workings of the license system.—Though the friends of law and temperance deeply deplored, at the time, the action of the city authorities, in granting licenses under the old law, thus anticipating, and virtually nullifying the new; yet in the Providence of God good will sometimes come out of evil; for it has been the means of holding up to the public gaze the odious system, in all its rottenness and deformity. The fountains of the "lowest depth" are there indeed and in fact broken up, the sluiceways of destruction are there thrown open wider than ever the "respectable men" and "the rest," from the gilded pile in the glittering saloon and hotel, down to the lowest pit of degradation and misery, are all in full blast, scattering "firebrands, arrows and death" around them, without stint or limit.

It is from that city, that proceeds the greatest opposition to the present anti-liquor law, and no money or pains will be spared to effect its repeal. It is there that most of the liquors are imported, manufactured and sold for the New England States, and when we consider the fraudulent adulteration and corruption of the most costly kinds, it is unquestionably an immensely profitable business. It is there that fortunes are made from the traffic, the makers living in splendid palaces, "clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day," while the miserable victims of its use are "lying at their gates full of sores;" their suffering wives and famishing children would "gladly be fed with the crumbs which fall from their table." It is on this unhallowed altar of "trade and profit," that the happiness and welfare of thousands have been, and is still demanded for a bleeding sacrifice. It is to sustain "trade and profit" in that city, that our children may be made drunkards, and our state scourged with pauperism, vice and crime. It is to sustain "trade and profit" there, that our toiling farmers and industrious mechanics and working men, and all the producing classes of the community are to be taxed for the support of pauperism and the punishment of criminals, made such by that "trade." Tax-payers—men of Massachusetts—will you quietly submit to all this? No—we hear you, with a