

THE GOTHENBURG SYSTEM.

Written for "Bonnie's" by a Scandinavian.

CERTAIN influential politicians among us have been hard at work for the past five or six years educating public opinion in favor of the so-called Gothenburg system for licensing the liquor traffic. Judging from present appearances they are likely to meet with some success. Only the other day the Massachusetts House, by a vote of 132 to 29, passed a second reading of a bill permitting cities which had voted license for two successive years to adopt the Scandinavian method of majority citizens voting its trial.

But before this system becomes favored on American life it would be well for the public to examine a little more closely into the character and working of the system. To be sure magazines and papers have been filled with eulogies of the system, special commissioners who have investigated the workings of the system heartily recommended it, and yet with all due respect for Mr. Gould, Mr. Kohn, and their writings do not show that they know what they are talking about. There are many resemblances and only few differences between the American and the Scandinavian systems of licensing public good, both are conducted under the eye of the law. In both systems it is required that the keepers of houses shall be of good repute, conduct their houses respectably, sell only pure liquors and close according to law, etc.

American licenses are granted at fixed fees; the Scandinavian are sold at auction. Then, as regards the difference between the American and the Scandinavian system, the American grants license to individuals for all kinds of liquors; the Gothenburg to licensing companies restricted to the sale of distilled. The American license is good only for one year, the Gothenburg for three years. According to the American plan the whole profits of the business go into the pockets of the licensee; according to the Scandinavian all the net profits, save 5 or 6 per cent. on the capital invested in the business, go into the public treasury, and are expended for stated public improvements or charity. That is about all the difference there is between the American and the Scandinavian licensing systems. The supposed advantages of the Scandinavian system, according to its champions, are:

1. Complete divorce of traffic from politics.
2. Private gain entirely eliminated.
3. Reduction of licenses, and reduction of temptations to drinking.
4. Advancement of temperance.

Rightly or wrongly there is a general belief that the liquor traffic is the chief corrupter of the State. Any scheme, therefore which excludes the saloon from influence in politics is likely to receive warm and general public approval. But what reason is there can be for expecting that from the adoption of the Gothenburg system is not apparent. It may take the traffic out of party politics, but even at present the traffic is largely non-partisan, following the party that favors the trade. But still, isn't it rather odd conclusion that the abolition of individual monopoly, and substitution of a corporate one, should serve to remove that monopoly from the arena of politics? Prior to the introduction of the Gothenburg system in Sweden, the traffic had very little to say quite different, and there is danger that in a short while, by reason of the licensing companies, Sweden will be the worst liquor-ruled country in the world.

Then as to the elimination of private profits. This is another immensely tak-

ing prospect as result of the adoption of the Gothenburg system. That squares one of the principal planks in the Populists' platform, and satisfies the demand of a vast number of lofty reformers. But it is true only in the letter, not in the spirit. No doubt the adoption of the Gothenburg system eliminates private profits, but it substitutes corporate profits. The champions of the system assert that the only profits the companies get is the 5 or 6 per cent. on their investments. And literally speaking that is true, but there are various outside channels connected with the monopoly which yield enormous profits.

If it were not so, let us ask a commonsense question. Considering the vast outlay necessary for establishing such a company and to conduct it properly, can a salaried its short tenure of power (three years) conditionally according to lease, or even at the mere pleasure of the provincial Governor, where, either in Sweden or the United States, is the body of typical business men who would undertake the job?

No, there are various sources of great revenue indirectly connected with the business, the chief among which, and the only one to which in the present paper I allude, is the liquor traffic. The companies are pledged to supply only pure and undiluted liquors in their homes. What is then more natural than for the companies to establish their own refineries? This they do, buying crude liquors in large quantities, they refine these and charge the respective towns from 20 to 30 per cent. for the operation. I have been told that Mr. Gould says that only 5 or 6 per cent. of the profits for retaining go to the companies, but a little reflection ought to show him the absurdity of such contention. The bond between the company and the municipality extends only to the sale of liquors. The reformer is not to be blamed for speculation, and has no more to do with their contract than if the company should decide to go into the business of making chairs for their homes, and in their bill of expenses charge for the supply of chairs.

Some years ago when I visited Gothenburg the people were enraged because the company had presented a bill for 10,000 broken brandy glasses (heavy, almost unbreakable ones). No, the Gothenburg system creates invincible brandy trusts, who use all kinds of devices to bolster up the system, and they seem to have succeeded in fooling our special commissioners as thoroughly as the Czar did Dr. Talnage.

Of late the companies have become zealous missionaries in distributing their wares—so zealous that a bill has been introduced in the Swedish Riksdag to prevent companies from sending their agents about the country touting for brandy orders.

Consider next the argument as to the reduction of licenses and reduction of temptations to drinking. This is only one of the many questions. Does the system advance temperance? How? Because the surplus profits are devoted to public improvements and charitable objects, the maintenance of temperance organizations, etc.? But is not such an allocation of the means a bribe to the public conscience? Advancement of temperance, forsooth! Yet brewers and distillers have seats upon the company boards, and the municipal machinery is used to disguise and conceal the increase in liquor by the drink, as well as shut the mouths of reformers by the monetary aid it gives to reform movements, especially temperance and Good Templar societies.

Permit me to give a few glimpses into the workings of the Gothenburg system. The army of officials are paid fat salaries; managers are paid as much

as one of our high-school teachers, having besides free home and perquisites from food and fermented drinks. Now the report issued by the Massachusetts Commission showed a large reduction of drunkenness traceable to the company's shops. Of course a manager is rightly interested in not letting any drunkenness on his premises if he can prevent it, and as magistrates and judges on the licensing board are shareholders in the refinery, the police have great difficulty in seeing drunken men coming from the company's shops. And if the police arrest such magistrates and judges there, and reprimand the police for arresting sober men.

But while the convictions for drunkenness traceable to the company have multiplied increased, the convictions for drunkenness contracted in other places has increased terribly; so that in Gothenburg, for instance, in eleven years, from 1880 to 1891, it was more than doubled.

In recent articles in *The Forum* Professor Gould, the indefatigable defender of the Gothenburg system, says: "A plan which has stood the test of more than a quarter of a century of successful operation offers an augury of hope."

When did professor Gould get that assurance? For years past I have frequently visited Gothenburg, and closely inquired into the working of the system. The temperance people of Gothenburg itself declare that it is a sham and that there are some exceptions, but they are rare, and have little weight.

We had the subject before us at the International Congress at Christiania in 1891, and of more than a dozen delegates from Gothenburg there were not more than two who tried to defend the system. The radical temperance forces all over Sweden and in Norway and Finland strenuously oppose it, having found by experience that when it is adopted, it becomes entrenched behind the cupidity of the taxpayer and hypocrisy of the reformer, and shielded and upheld by the respectability, influence and wealth of its promoters. Dr. Hedberg, the American and president of the *Gothenburg Commercial*, the most influential paper in Sweden, and truly styled the "father of the Gothenburg system," has become convinced that it is a failure, and now is advocating the total Prohibition of distilled liquors.

Our last error will be worse than the first if we adopt the Gothenburg system in this country.

THE DUKE AND THE TRADE.

At the annual banquet of the Country Brewers' Society, held at the Hotel Metropolitan, under the presidency of Mr. James Stewart, (Messrs. Hawker & Co., Bishop's Stortford), on Monday, the following letter was read from the Duke of Devonshire:—"Vienna, Oct. 17, 1894, Sir.—I regret that absence from England will prevent my being present at the dinner of the Country Brewers' Society on the 22nd, as I should have been glad to have shown my sympathy with a trade and interest which are, in my opinion, exposed to an unfair and unjust attack. I observe your program, and has stated that it has been his duty on the part of successive Liberal Governments since 1883 to announce their acceptance of the Local Option (Veto) Bill. This statement, if correct, would induce a Government of which I was a member. I am unable at present to refer to the terms of Sir W. Harcourt's statement on behalf of that Government, but I should be very much surprised to find it contained any admission of the principle of confederation, the property of any class or trade without adequate compensation. I remain, yours sincerely, (Signed) DEVONSHIRE." The reading of the letter was greeted with loud cheers.

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THE CONCORD GRAPE

The Concord grape was originated by Mr. E. W. Bull, of Concord Mass. The millions of his countrymen who have enjoyed the fruit of the vine owe an indebted debt of gratitude to this man, who, by the creation of this new fruit did more for viticulture in Eastern America than all our other grape growers together. America is really indebted to him not only for the Concord, but for the fine varieties produced from the Concord by others. The children of the Concord is legion. A few of them are: Niagara, Puckington, Worden, Eaton, Cambridge, Challenge, Black Hawk, Morita, Lake Washington, Jefferson, El Dorado, St. Victoria, produced by the late T. T. Miner, of New York; the Woodruff by Mr. Woodruff, of Michigan; Moore Early, by the late John B. Moore, of the beautiful Triumphant, given to the South by Mr. G. W. Campbell, of Ohio; also the new Campbell Early; the Brighton Diamond, by Mr. Jacob Moore, of New York, and last, and among the best, of many seedlings by Mr. Bull himself, his new varieties, the Esther and Beckwith.

Hobby—"I was out to a stag party last night, dearie."

Debbie—"Yes, I heard you stagger as you came in."

Charlie seems so changed since his trip away, doesn't he?"

Frances—"Indeed, he doesn't seem like another girl almost."

Husband—"Why so happy?"

Wife—"Bridget, the cook, is going to remain with us after all. Mrs. Jones, whose situation she was going, did it last week. Wasn't it sweet of her?"

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