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THE UNSOLVED PROBLEM.

WHAT SHALL BE DONE WITH THE
LIQUOR TRAFFIC?

BY

R. D. HARPER, D.D.

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THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROHIBITIONIST,

OR, PROHIBITION BY THE PEOPLE.

Compiled by J. N. STEARNS.

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Address **J. N. STEARNS, Publishing Agent,**

58 Reade Street, New York.

THE UNSOLVED PROBLEM.

WHAT SHALL BE DONE WITH THE LIQUOR TRAFFIC?

BY R. D. HARPER, D.D.

GREAT moral problems present themselves betimes for solution. Time was, when the great problem before the American people was, the question of Slavery; that problem God solved some twenty-five years ago, with tears and blood which no human arithmetic will ever compute. The great problem now before the people of this country, discussed through pulpit, press, and platform, is, "What shall be done with the Liquor Traffic, with all its attendant evils?" Nor is this question confined to our own country. Looking across the Atlantic, we find it in the British Isles, on the Continent of Europe, and in the far-away countries of the Orient. Its waves ripple up against every shore; everywhere it is monopolizing public solicitude. No other question is so stirring the world's thought to-day. Further, let me remind you that this is a question in which we are all personally interested, whether we are conscious of it or not. Is there an individual in this assembly who has not been "touched," in some way, either directly or remotely, by this ubiquitous curse? If the shadow is not in your own home, do you not see it in the home of some relative

or friend? How many parents, wives, and children are filled with deepest solicitude! You would not have that dear boy who climbs upon your knee, come staggering home to your door-step some night, not for his weight in gold. Yet this has been the bitter experience of not a few. Living "skeletons" there are, at many a hearthstone, compared with which even the coffin itself were a silent benediction. We are all interested, therefore, in some form, in this theme. And whether we look at it from the standpoint of humanity, patriotism, or political economy; or from the still higher stand-point of morals and religion, you will agree with me, I think, that it demands the thoughtful consideration of all Christians and patriots alike. Let me therefore ask you to reconsider it thoughtfully with me for a few moments this morning.

Magnitude.—Well it is, I think, that we should consider at the outset the magnitude of this evil.

Our very familiarity with certain forms of evil often blunts our sensibility, or renders us indifferent to their enormity. From childhood we have grown up familiar with the drinking customs of society. The saloon meets us at every corner. The drunkard staggers across our path. The morning paper startles us with the obituary of some acquaintance or friend who has gone down to an untimely grave. We are startled for a moment; the thought flashes across our mind perchance that this "Liquor Traffic" is really a

dreadful business, and is doing a world of harm ; but that is all. We either do not know or we forget the appalling magnitude of this curse. In no other way can we explain the surprising apathy on the part of otherwise good men and women on this subject. Well is it, therefore, that we should lift the coffin-lid be-times, and hold up the skeleton to our thought.

Life.—Think, then, of the cost of the Liquor Traffic in life. If 60,000 men and women were swept away annually by pestilence or earthquake, we would be startled. Yet who thinks of these 60,000 drunkards? One by one they go down to their untimely graves without a thought, often without a tear or a regret. “More lives sacrificed,” says Gladstone, “every year by intemperance, than by all the horrors of war and famine and pestilence combined.” What a destroying angel it is.

Money.—The cost of the Liquor Traffic in money. Eight hundred millions (according to statistics at Washington) expended last year, in the United States alone, for alcoholic drinks. A sum so vast that it fairly staggers our poor thought to grasp it. Not only lost, but worse than lost, for had these millions been cast into the sea or turned to ashes we would have had only the loss, without the curse of shame and agony and death which has been entailed. And on the other hand, had these \$800,000,000 been invested in industrial pursuits, what an effect they would have produced upon the general welfare and

prosperity of the country at large. What wheels they would have turned. What homes they would have comforted.

Collateral.—The collateral vices, too, with which this Traffic is leagued and which it fosters. Not only drunkenness itself (that were bad enough), but other shames and crimes to which it directly leads. Look into our police and criminal courts, or read the presentments of our Grand Jury, or reports of our Prison Inspectors, and you will find that the saloon is the hotbed in which seeds of crime are sprouted and nurtured into awful realities. The saloon is, in fact, the primary-school where the young take their first lessons, and are then graduated for life into the grand army of Crime.

Curses.—The curses which it entails in a thousand forms. Not only the wreck of the poor inebriate himself, in body, mind, and spirit, disqualifying him for business, blasting his reputation, impairing his judgment, demoralizing his conscience, destroying his will-power, dethroning his reason, converting him oftentimes into a beast and a demon, making him a terror to his family and curse to the community, shortening his days, and blasting his future. Not merely this, but the curse of his example and the hereditary taint, the blood poison, which he transmits to his children, sending the virus of appetite down through the veins of unborn generations. What harvests from the sowing!

Ruin.—The ruinous consequences of this traffic on

the community, apart from the poor inebriate himself. Think of the estates which are wasted, homes desolated, reputations blasted, hearts broken; what widowhood and orphanage; what shame, poverty, and suffering; what prison cells and almshouses; what sacrifice of life and property; and what tens of thousands (many of them young men, the pride of loving hearts, and the hope of our country) it is sweeping on its burning tide to irretrievable ruin. Think of all these things until your brain reels and your heart grows sick, and then remember that the *half* has not been told. Never until the Recording Angel shall make out the complete inventory, will it be fully known how much our poor race has suffered from this embodiment of all shames and crimes.

ALLIES.

Nor is this all. In making up our estimate of the magnitude of this evil, we must take into account the allies with which it is leagued and the influences with which it is entrenched.

Appetite.—One of these is appetite. And this includes not merely the great army of habitual drinkers; but millions more, both men and women (I am sorry to say), who take a glass of wine or champagne sometimes, merely as a matter of social enjoyment, but who have, nevertheless, already formed the appetite, and are not willing to have their liberty in this matter

abridged. This is the first division of the grand army back of the saloon.

Wealth.—Another of these allies is wealth. Money accumulated and money in the traffic itself; for no line of business we find yields so large a percentage of profit, in proportion to the capital invested. Of the Liquor Traffic it may truthfully be said that there are “millions in it,” and these millions are its willing allies always at command in every contest. The total value of the liquor business of the country, plant and all, is estimated at \$1,200,000,000. This is the second division behind the saloon.

Influence.—And the third is influence. Influence in high places and low; at the ballot-box and in legislative halls; through the press, and on the platform; in the pulpit and in the pew. Reaching out its ubiquitous fingers it touches every profession and trade, and with its despotic wand it either intimidates men to silence, or commands their positive co-operation.

These are the three great powers (Wealth, Appetite, and Influence) with which this traffic is entrenched and fortified. And certainly, when we think of it, they are formidable enough. No wonder is it, that the struggle has been long and fierce and sometimes apparently hopeless. Many a time I have been discouraged. Never since Slavery lifted its brazen front and shook its finger defiantly in the face of Freedom, and fired at length on the old flag, have the friends of

right in this land been called to measure arms with such a foe. And we shall be more than unwise, if we either fail to ascertain or thoughtlessly underestimate the strength of the enemy in our front. Its name is legion.

Such, then, is the magnitude of this evil, both in its curse and in its power. And I have presented this aspect of the question to give you some faint conception of the enormity of the evil which is blighting our homes, wasting our treasure, and imperilling the very stability of our free institutions. Should it not awaken our thoughtful solicitude and make us in "dead earnest" in this matter?

Statistics.—Before I pass from this aspect of the subject, let me give you the statistics of our own city. We have in this city * 6,059 licensed saloons; probably one-fourth as many more unlicensed. One saloon to every twenty-six voters of the entire population; reaching, if planted side by side in a straight line, over a distance of thirty miles. While on the other hand we have in this city 1,095 bakeries, 3,454 groceries, 245 school-houses, and 648 churches, making a total of 5,442. In other words, the saloons outnumber all the bakeries, groceries, school-houses, and churches put together by 597. What a startling record this is for the city of Philadelphia. And yet back of these 6,000 saloons there is an awful unwritten record of

* This lecture was prepared before the present High-License Law went into effect.

waste, poverty, suffering, crime, and death, which no human arithmetic will ever compute. Is it not time that we should wake up to the reality and put forth our united efforts for the suppression of this great crime against God, home, and our native land?

Remedy.—We come now to the consideration of the second question, namely, the Remedy.

What can be done or what should be done to arrest the progress of this moral epidemic? This is the great "unsolved problem" which has been on the black-board of this nation for more than half a century, to my certain knowledge; and about the solution of which (I am sorry to say) even the friends of temperance themselves are not of one mind. And this want of harmony among themselves has been the greatest of all misfortunes to the cause. Divided in sentiment, they come to the front in broken ranks, each division fighting in its own way, and with its own weapons; while the enemy, always in solid column, whips them in detail.

Within the past quarter of a century (to go no farther back) various expedients have been tried. All of them, I am free to say, good in themselves, and well meant by their advocates and friends; every one of them too, I believe, has done good. All honor to the heroes (both men and women) who have fought so bravely in the past with such weapons as they had, old flint-lock muskets and wooden swords, which have long since been discarded as useless. Victory may

not have perched upon their banners, yet the flag has never trailed in the dust. It still floats aloft, higher to-day than ever before for the brave and willing hands which held it up as best they could. All honor, we say, to the pioneers and martyrs in this cause. Heroes they were.

All past expedients, however, have failed to accomplish the desired result. Some few limbs, indeed, have been lopped off here and there; but still this great Upas Tree has been rooting itself deeper and more deeply in the soil. The problem is unsolved; the epidemic is unchecked; and so the question comes back intensified in its importance, What shall be done?

Two remedies are now prominently before the public mind, competing for popular favor. Let me ask you to consider them with me:

License.—One is the policy of License, or Regulation, as it is sometimes called.

Regulate the traffic, it is said, by law; fix the license high; place the business in the hands of reputable men; limit it with wise restrictions; make the penalties severe, and see that they are rigidly enforced. This is, in substance, the remedy of License, or "High License," as it is now called. And the advocates of this policy claim for it three things: 1st. That it will diminish both the manufacture, sale, and consumption of intoxicating liquors. 2d. That it will place the traffic under the restraint of law and order. 3d. That it will furnish a revenue to the State, com-

selling those who manufacture paupers, criminals, widows, orphans, and imbeciles to aid in their support. This is, in substance, the policy of "License" or "High License," advocated by not a few who are really friendly to the cause, and who believe, honestly enough, that this is the very best remedy which can be provided for the removal of this evil. This policy, therefore, merits a fair and candid hearing.

HIGH-LICENSE LAW.

Law.—Just here let me advert for one moment to the "High-License Law," recently enacted in our Commonwealth, and which went into effect on the first day of July. The provisions of this new law are in substance as follows:

1. That license for the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors shall be vested hereafter only in the courts.
2. That such license shall be issued only to men of good moral character, accompanied by two bondsmen, and the certificate of twelve reputable citizens.
3. That license shall be granted only when the court shall deem it necessary for the accommodation of the public.
4. That the license fee shall range from \$100 to \$500, according to the ratio of population.
5. That the revenue thus derived shall be divided between the City, County, and State.
6. That no liquor shall be sold on credit, to inebriates or minors, on Sundays or election days.
7. That no saloons shall be located beside a Church, School, Hospital, Asylum,

or College. 8. That the penalties for the violation of this law shall be a fine not exceeding \$5,000, or imprisonment not exceeding twelve months.

Such, in substance, is the law. And looking at it merely as a "legal document," I am prepared to give it my hearty approval. Its provisions are clear, full, and strong. It is, in my judgment, the best license law that has ever been enacted. Looking at it, however, as a remedy for the liquor traffic, I fail to see in it anything to commend. 1st. It does not aim to accomplish the very thing desired, namely, the extinction of the liquor traffic. On the other hand, it does deliberately propose to continue it under the sanction of law, and to make it as respectable as any other line of business. 2d. It presupposes an impossible thing—an absurdity, indeed—namely, to place the traffic in the hands of moral and reputable men. Think of it! The thing itself so bad; such a moral pest, that it shall not be located near a Church, School, Hospital, or College, and yet placed in the hands of moral and reputable men, forsooth. What an absurdity! 3d. It grants the right to make drunkards, criminals, widows, orphans, and imbeciles, and then, with the revenue of the traffic, proposes to build jails and almshouses, and pay the police expenses. What astonishing political economy that is! What superlative idiocy! Sell the right for so much money, and then with the money pay the funeral expenses. I object to this law, therefore, and to every license law,

because, whatever its provisions and restrictions, it is, in itself, a fallacy. Facts show that license simply perpetuates the wrong and makes it, if possible, more injurious; for the "gilded saloon," in my judgment, is a greater curse than the "dram-shop." By as much as it is more attractive, by so much does it touch and ruin a higher grade of humanity.

My chief objection, however, is this: That license (high or low) is morally wrong in principle. If the traffic itself is wrong (about which there is no dispute), then I claim that under no circumstances of policy, expediency, revenue, or anything else, can it be right to give it the sanction of law. If it were proposed to legalize gambling or prostitution, or any other form of vice and shame, and make them respectable by law, the moral sense of the community would be indignant. Why in the one case rather than the other? I submit this moral aspect of the question of license, therefore, to your thoughtful consideration. For myself, I shall co-operate with the friends of temperance just as far as I possibly can, whether I agree with them or not. But I never can consent, by word or ballot of mine, to sanction this wrong, cover it up with the ermine of justice, and throw around these gateways to ruin the sanction of law. Never!

Prohibition.—The other remedy before the public mind is prohibition. And prohibition means simply to prohibit by law the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors. The right to enact such prohibitory law cannot be questioned. We now prohibit a thousand other forms of wrong-doing because they are injurious to public morals. Even in the matter now under consideration we prohibit the sale of liquors to

minors and drunkards, on the Sabbath and election days. Why not every day, and to all classes of the community, and say by law that this nefarious traffic shall stop now and forever? Why not? For three reasons I commend this remedy to your thoughtful consideration and approval:

1st. Because all other measures, however good in themselves, or well meant by their friends, have failed to accomplish the desired end. They have been, at best, but opiates. Like a boy with a barlow knife, we have been hacking at the bark, and lopping off a limb here and there. This remedy, on the other hand, proposes to girdle the tree and cut the roots.

2d. Experience has demonstrated that it is an effective remedy wherever it has been tried, in whole or in part, in fifteen States. Take the State of Maine for an example. I have put myself to some trouble to ascertain the facts in this case. "Since the enactment of the prohibitory law in this State," says the Governor of the State, "the law has been as faithfully enforced as any other criminal statute. The number of paupers and convicts has decreased one-fourth, with a marked change in the general prosperity of the State."

"Intemperance," says Hon. James G. Blaine, "has steadily decreased in this State, until now it can be said in truth that there is no equal number of people in the Anglo-Saxon world among whom so small an amount of intoxicating liquor is consumed, as among the 650,000 inhabitants of Maine." And what has been accomplished in Maine may be accomplished, by the same means, in Pennsylvania and in all the States in our beloved country.

3d. Time has come when something decisive and earnest must be done. Too long already have we tampered with this evil. Patient endurance has but made it gigantic in proportion and defiant in spirit. Is it not time that the people of this land should say, "Thou shalt not"? Is not this the last resort of a forbearing people?

Objection.—I am reminded, perchance, that this would destroy one of the leading industries of the country, yielding last year a revenue of \$86,000,000. My reply is, that if that industry costs twice that amount to pay its funeral expenses, as it does, the sooner it is destroyed the better.

Objection.—I am reminded, perchance, that public sentiment is not prepared for such radical measures. Possibly this may be true, possibly not. Certainly, however, this is no argument against the law itself. What moral law ever started with a majority on its side? How many were opposed to the Declaration of Independence at the outset, and prophesied defeat! How long would God have delayed the decalogue if He had waited for public sentiment? "Bring the men up to the colors! Let us aim to do that which is right, and the right will eventually prevail and triumph."

Objection.—Am I told that you cannot make men moral by legislation? No criminal law is enacted for that purpose. Intemperance has been the curse of our race from the beginning of time, and there will be drunkards, I doubt not, when the trump of God shall sound. What I claim is, that as other crimes are restrained and diminished by law and its penalties, so there will be fewer drunkards when men are re-

strained from the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors, and fewer still, when the drunkard himself is punished for dethroning his reason and converting himself into a demon and a beast. Some day this high ground will be reached.

Outlook.—One word, now, as to the outlook, and I have done. Looking back over the conflict for a quarter of a century, I find much in retrospect that is encouraging and hopeful. Wonderful changes have taken place in that period in public sentiment, and in the drinking customs of society. Progress is written upon all these years. Looking around me, I find more to cheer and inspire me for the future. The agitation of the subject through pulpit, press, and platform. The alarming desperation of the Liquor Traffic itself. The enlistment of Christian women from forty States and Territories. The intensified interest awakening in the Christian Church. The marvellous increase in temperance literature. The new chapter on alcohol in our school-books. The temperance plank in the platform of labor organizations. The White Ribbon Army among the children and youth. The Roman Catholic influence over 7,000,000 of people. The exclusion of intemperate men from all responsible positions. The introduction of the subject into Legislative Assemblies. The alarm in all political circles, the ghost that will not down. The submission of the question to the arbitrament of the ballot and the royal names on the banner wherever it floats. All these inspire me with hope. Aye, more. With the conviction that it has not only come to the front, but that it has come to stay. "The temperance reform stands to-day on the heights of Christian Heroism

and answered prayer." It is the cause of God and humanity. The morning light is breaking! And of nothing am I surer than this, that sooner or later, and in God's own good time and way, victory will perch on this banner. Let us not be discouraged. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not." "The ploughman shall overtake the reaper." The new emancipation is coming. Prohibition is the sublime fact of the future.

"'Tis weary, watching wave on wave,
 And yet the tide heaves onward;
 We build, like corals—grave on grave,
 But pave a pathway sunward.
 We're beaten back in many a fray,
 Yet ever strength we borrow;
 And where the vanguard rests to-day,
 The rear shall camp to-morrow."

*Action of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church,
 May, 1887.*

Resolved, That this Assembly reiterates and emphasizes the deliverance of the former Assemblies with reference to the sin of intemperance, the unspeakable evil and wrong of the liquor traffic, the use of intoxicating drink as a beverage, and the duty of all members of our churches to encourage and promote the cause of temperance in every legitimate way, and especially by the power of personal influence and example, and by the strong arm of the civil law.

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