

PROHIBITION

[The following address presents in substance the line of argument followed by Mr. Bryan in the sixty speeches made in Ohio during the week of October 25th to 30th, 1915.]

Opposition to the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors rests upon the proposition that alcohol is a poison which, taken into the system, weakens the body, impairs the strength of the mind and menaces the morals. This proposition is either true or false; if it is false then the cause of prohibition fails, and not only the cause of prohibition, but all regulation of the liquor traffic. If this proposition is sound it will be difficult to find a valid reason for permitting the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors as a beverage.

We challenge the opponents of prohibition to meet us on this fundamental proposition. Will they accept the challenge? No! Because all history supports the doctrine that alcoholic drinks are injurious. If you will consult your Bibles you will find that 2500 years ago Daniel, a Hebrew captive in Babylon, asked that he might be permitted to prove the superiority of water over wine. The prince who was charged with the care of Daniel and his three companions was instructed to feed them with the meat from the king's table and to furnish them wine such as the king used, but, yielding to the eloquent appeal of Daniel, the prince gave them ten days for the test and when the time was up he was compelled to admit that Daniel and his companions were "fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. From that day to this the test has been going on and never once has it been decided in favor of alcohol.

But you need not rest on the experience of the past; you can test it today. Select one hundred young men from any country or from any clime—no matter under what form of government they live or what language they speak. Divide them into groups of fifty each; let one group use alcoholic liquor and the other group drink water only, and those who drink water will win the honors in the colleges, take the prizes on the athletic fields and prove their superiority in every line of business.

UNCLE SAM'S CARE OF YOUTH

If you visit the naval school at Annapolis, Maryland, you will find there more than eight hundred young men, the pick of the country, selected from every congressional district in the United States. They are being trained at government expense for government service, and Uncle Sam is anxious that they shall show the maximum of efficiency and capacity. These young men are not allowed to use alcohol during their stay in the college. Why? Because the government believes that alcohol is harmful. If the opponents of prohibition think that the use of alcohol is a benefit, why do they not attack the government's policy and compel the college authorities to give alcohol to the students? And if alcohol is injurious, why is not every father and every mother as anxious about the welfare of a son as Uncle Sam is about the welfare of the boys entrusted to his care? But it is not necessary to multiply illustrations. Experience has everywhere and always been against alcohol. It has been not only accused, but convicted, of being an enemy of the race.

All hail to the drink of drinks—to water, the daily need of every living thing! It ascends from the earth in obedience to the summons of the sun, and descends in showers of blessings. It gives of its sparkling beauty to the fragrant flower; its alchemy transmutes base clay into golden grain; it is the radiant canvass upon which the finger of the Infinite traces the rainbow of promise. It is the beverage that refreshes and brings no sorrow with it—Jehovah looked upon it at creation's dawn and said "it is good."

BUSINESS WORLD AGAINST INTOXICANTS

It is so well known that the use of liquor is indefensible that the business world is throwing its influence against even the moderate use of alcoholic drinks. The man who drinks is the last one to find a job when employees are wanted and the first one to lose his job when employees are being dismissed. This economic pressure is being brought to bear against alcoholic

liquors throughout the industrial world. If any of you think that drinking is a business advantage to any man anywhere, let me suggest a test which you can apply between now and election day, and if your vote is governed by the test you will vote for prohibition on next Tuesday. Here is the test. Go to the best friend you have and ask him for a recommendation; tell him to make it as strong as possible. After he has said all the good that he can of you let him write at the end of the recommendation three words—write them in red ink so that they will be sure to be seen—"And he drinks." Then take the recommendation to any man who has money enough to employ another and watch his face when he reads the recommendation—and then wait for a job. No brewer, distiller or saloon-keeper ever added those words to a recommendation given to a friend—find such a recommendation if you can. If the men who make liquor and sell it know its effect well enough never to put in a recommendation that the man recommended drinks, why should anybody else think it an advantage in business?

If you think that a saloon helps a town, answer this question: Did you ever know a "wet" town to put the number of saloons on any sign board or in any advertising literature? The number of banks, business houses, factories, colleges, schools—all these are mentioned as attractions, but not the number of saloons or the amount spent in them. Why?

If the use of alcoholic liquor is an injury and if this fact is universally known, why is its sale as a beverage licensed? The arguments against the saloon are as conclusive as the arguments against alcohol itself.

IF A BENEFIT, WHY THE TAX?

Let me pass on to you an argument which was given to me by a retired farmer in southern Nebraska. He moved into a village to spend the latter days of his life and soon after he had reached the village was solicited to sign a petition for a man who wanted to open a saloon there. He refused to sign the petition, and, when asked for his reason, replied that the town did not treat the saloon keeper fairly. The applicant for a license had heard many other reasons, but never having heard that one given before, he asked the man to explain. The explanation was like this: "You want to start your saloon for the benefit of the town, don't you?" "Yes," replied the would-be saloon-keeper. "You think it will bring trade to the town and improve business, don't you?" "Yes," said the man who wanted the license. "Well," said the farmer, "if your saloon will help the town, draw trade and improve business they ought to give you a bounty instead of making you pay a high price for the privilege of starting a saloon."

Can you escape this logic? You know that the saloon is not a legitimate business in the sense in which you apply that term to other business enterprises. If a grocer wants to open a store in your city, you welcome him as you do the man who wants to start a hardware store, a bank, a restaurant, a butcher-shop, or any other place of business, except the saloon. But if a man wants to start a saloon you meet him at the city limits and say to him, "you can not open a saloon in this city unless you pay the city \$1105 a year, and even then you must submit to certain restrictions. The butcher-shop can open at any hour in the morning, but your saloon can not open before a certain hour. The restaurant can stay open as long as it wants to at night, but your saloon must close at a certain hour. Everybody else can sell anything else to anybody at any time, but if you open a saloon in this town you must not only comply with the restrictions named, but you must agree not to sell anybody under age or over-drunk. Why do you make this distinction between the man engaged in other business and the man running a saloon? Because you recognize that the saloon is an injury, and, therefore, you subject it to different treatment from that accorded people in other business.

THE ABSURDITY OF LICENSE

How absurd it is to license a man to make men drunk and then fine men for getting drunk. I heard this illustrated many years ago and I know of no better illustration of the inconsis-

ency of the policy. A man said that it was like licensing a person to spread the itch through a town and then fining the people for scratching.

Suppose a man applied for a license to spread hog cholera throughout this county; would you give him a license? No. He could not bring enough money into the county to purchase a license to spread disease among the hogs; why, then, will you license a man to spread disease among human beings—disease that destroys the body, robs the mind of its energy and undermines the morals of men?

What excuse do the representatives of the brewery, distillery and saloon give for opposing prohibition? They formerly insisted that any interference with the sale of alcoholic liquor was an attack upon individual rights, but that argument has been so completely answered that we do not hear much of the personal liberty plea now. No man can assert as a right that which interferes with the equal rights of others; neither can any man insist that respect for his rights requires the toleration of a system that invades the more sacred rights of others. No man can claim that his right to drink intoxicating liquor requires the licensing of a saloon which pollutes the locality in which it is situated and brings want and misery and violence into the homes around it.

And I call you to witness that the brewer and the distiller understand the saloon; they are not willing to have a saloon located near them. As a rule they live in the fashionable part of the city and would not sign a petition for the location of a saloon near where their families reside. They know it would reduce the value of their property and subject their children to an objectionable environment. No, they will not have a saloon near them, but they will locate their saloons among the poor, knowing full well when they do so that their saloons will absorb the money that their patrons ought to spend on wife and children. They not only impoverish the poor and multiply their sufferings, but they increase the death rate among the children. Who will defend them before the bar of God when they are confronted with the violation of the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill?"

AS TO COMPENSATION

And yet we are now told that society ought to reimburse the liquor dealer if prohibition causes him any financial loss! Superlative impudence! There are two answers to this insolent demand. One is that prohibition does not take from the liquor dealer one foot of land that he now owns; it does not remove one brick from any building that he occupies. It simply requires him to put his land and building to a different use. Will any man complain that you lessen the value of his gun because you say that he must use it on game and not on human beings?

If you close a saloon, the building stands there as useful as ever, with the possible exception of the fixtures. Let the saloon-keeper turn his building into a bakery and sell bread to the people who have gone hungry because the money that ought to have bought bread has been used for drink. Will the brewer suffer? His building can be used for other purposes. In prohibition states breweries and distilleries have been converted into packing houses, pickle factories and into plants for the manufacture of non-alcoholic drinks. At Salem, Oregon, a brewery is now used for the manufacture of loganberry juice—the substitute for grape juice in that state. I believe in conversion. The most important conversion is the conversion of the individual from sin to righteousness. Among the nations the most important conversion is the promised conversion of the swords into plowshares, and in business I know of nothing better than the conversion of an alcohol plant into a factory for the production of something which is helpful and wholesome.

But there is another answer to make to the demand for compensation. Let the liquor dealer compensate the mother for the son he has taken from her; let him compensate the wife for the husband of whom he has robbed her; let him compensate the children for the father whom he has first transformed into a brute and then driven to suicide. Let him compensate those whom he has wronged by restoring to them the priceless value of homes ruined and lives wrecked, and then society will be glad to compensate him for whatever pecuniary loss he may suffer by the closing of a business which he knew to be harmful—a business which can not thrive except as the community suffers.

Does the liquor dealer intend to make restitution for what he has taken in the past? No! He