

# THE THOMAS COUNTY CAT.

**Ed. CAT.**—I have had the pleasure of reading with much interest an article from the pen of the venerable W. M. Edwards M. D. found in your valuable paper of July 8th, subject, "Prohibition a failure."

Now by permission we shall attempt a reply to the Dr. and to all others of like faith. And having had a perfect understanding of the Drs. position and his disciples, it seems good to us to write of the things wherein the Dr. needs to be instructed. For be it understood by all, the Dr. is a temperance man, but still he is crying out both by pen and tongue, prohibition a failure.

Now to the subject in hand and, 1st The practical workings of prohibition, or does prohibition prohibit.

The principal, if not the only argument which is now being employed against prohibition is that it is impracticable and does not prohibit, having heard this statement so often and from such seemingly credible sources we have been led to investigate the subject with some care, we have concluded thus, that if prohibition was and is truly a failure, and its enforcement impossible, that its further advocacy by temperance people would be a wanton if not a wicked waste of time. I have taken no small amount of pains to gather up the most authentic and reliable testimony that could be found bearing upon this subject; and the result is to confirm me in the conviction that prohibition is not only practicable but the only feasible measure for the radical suppression of the evils of intemperance. The opponents of prohibition are eternally convicting themselves of the most palpable absurdities by constantly saying that prohibition does not prohibit and then turning square around and making this assumption a pretext for advocating license which most certainly does not prohibit, but on the contrary increases the sale of alcoholic drinks why is very brewer and distiller and every saloon keeper from the lowest to the highest and would be respectable vender, I am opposed to it; if prohibition is a failure as rumites would feign have us to believe, and its practical operations tantamount to free trade and tends to increase rather than diminish the quantity of liquor sold and consumed why should those who are engaged in the traffic whose interest would be greatly subserved by such a result opposed to what they call "sumptuary laws" and pledge by all that is sacred that they will support for office only men who are open committed to license, why are they loing all in their power at the present to procure the repeal of all prohibitory statutes, if prohibition is a failure and increases their trade, why did they oppose the constitutional amendment prohibiting the manufacture and sale of liquor in Kansas and Iowa. Why are they now engaged in a most desperate fight in other states to prevent the submission to the people of similar constitutional amendments. Why pray tell us, Dr. is the whole rum oligarchy fighting prohibition with such desperation if it is such an unmitigated failure and such an advantage to their business. If more liquor is sold under prohibition than under license it certainly is a financial benefit to all who are engaged in the traffic and to be consistent they should fight for its adoption. There are men who will argue on the one hand that prohibition is injurious to other branches of commerce, they say people will not come to a town to buy goods where liquor selling is prohibited and in the very next breath they will turn around and pronounce prohibition an utter failure. "Verily the legs of the lame are not equal." No better argument can be desired to prove that prohibition does prohibit than the fact that all rum-drinkers and rum-sellers are opposed to it. They would be first to extol its advantages and urge its adoption if it could be made to subserve their mercenary interests.

The supposed failure of prohibition laws arises from a false notion as to what we have a right to expect from such measures. Many individuals infer that all prohibitory laws are failures because they do at once enforce themselves and put an end to all drinking or drunkenness. No intelligent or well informed prohibitionist ever expected any such impossible results from the enactment of prohibitory measures. We have no reason to expect any more from a law prohibiting the manufacture and sale of ardent spirits, than from any other statute regulating or prohibiting other crimes. It will be found upon examination that prohibitory laws wherever they exist are enforced quite as successfully as any other portion of the criminal code. It is important however in the first place before we can declare a law a failure that we determine what constitutes a law a failure. If we assume that every law is a failure that is violated or that does not totally prevent the things it interdicts, then all laws are failures, for there is not a law on our statute books that is not violated every day. We have been in the habit of expecting altogether too much from statutory enactments interdicting the sale of intoxicating beverages. We have been unreasonable in our demands, and because a sentence against an evil work has not been executed speedily. Our hearts have been prone to despondency and we have declared all prohibitory laws fail-

ures simply because they have not met our exaggerated and unreasonable demands and expectations. No doubt many of these laws, tried by the standard of our false philosophy have been in many instances failures; but when we look at it from the standpoint of common sense and studied in the light of a rational philosophy, and place by the side of other prohibitory laws designed to prevent other crimes, we find that they are not only not failures but good wholesome and successful laws capable of an enforcement commensurate with any others that do credit to our criminal code. The arguments usually employed to prove prohibition a failure, if applied to any of our laws regulating public or private offences would prove their failures also. For instance we have laws prohibiting murder, gambling and the publication of obscene literature, yet men do murder, gamble and publish obscene books and pictures. Are the laws inhibiting these crimes failures because men violate them occasionally? And shall we repeal them and substitute license laws in their stead and give legal sanction and respectability to murder, gambling and lewdness simply because men will do these things in spite of laws? Are we bound to license everything we can not prevent? If so then is not a crime known to the black and villainous catalogues of crime and infamy and shame that we should not foist into legal respectability, and protect by law. An argument that proves too much proves nothing. If we must license one evil because we can't radically exterminate it, then it follows as a legitimate and logical sequence that we should license every other evil of a similar character, and as we can't prevent murder, adultery, theft and lewdness we should license them.

In considering the rationale of prohibition as it relates to the liquor traffic the question of its possible success or unlimited enforcement should not be considered until the antecedent question of the righteousness or the unrighteousness of the traffic is first determined.

All license law is based upon the assumption that it is not a sin to manufacture and sell alcoholic beverages, while all prohibitory laws are based upon the defensible doctrine of its exceeding sinfulness. The real question therefore that lies at the very foundation of this subject is not whether prohibition is a failure but whether the transmutation of good wholesome nutritious grain into unwholesome and unnutritious and deadly poison and selling the same to the physical, social, intellectual and moral detriment of all who buy it, is right or wrong.

Every person who has the capacity for reflection must see that neither the manufacture nor sale of alcoholic liquors can be carried on without violating the law of (God) and jeopardizing the most sacred rights of man. One thing is certain therefore and that is, that no matter whether prohibition is a failure or a success, so far as its practical operations are concerned the principle itself is just and right and founded on the laws of eternal equity and justice, and for this reason if for no other every good and honest man who desires truth and righteousness to triumph over sin and iniquity should give his hearty indorsement and support. It is not a question of mere expediency, but a question of principle. It is not a measure of policy, but a question of right or wrong.

If it is wrong to be a drunkard it is most certainly wrong to sell men that the use of which inevitably transforms them into drunkards, and if it is a sin to sell the drunkards drink, it is a sin to license men to sell it, and to do so is to be in the sin of drunkard making, and also to be responsible for all its casualties. It follows, therefore, as a just and legitimate corollary that to prohibit the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks is our imperative duty. Having now shown that prohibition is right as to principle, let us enquire as to what it has been in practice. Rumists inform us with a flourish of trumpets that it has been a failure. On this point I am compelled to join issue with them. The doctrine of the radical prohibition of the liquor traffic is comparatively a new doctrine as yet in its infancy, so far as this country is concerned, at least; indeed, we may say that it is yet considered by many as an experimental problem. It has never had a fair and unembarrassed trial, and hence its feasibility has not yet been determined, and to pronounce it a failure is to decide prematurely and anticipate the result of the pending investigation. Nevertheless, it has in every instance where it has been fairly tested proved itself the best method yet adopted to prevent the evils of intemperance.

But let us see whether prohibition has failed or not.

Let us turn our eyes to those countries where it has been tried for thousands of years. From the Bible we learn that it was a complete triumph during the forty years that the children of Israel journeyed through the wilderness toward the promised land. It succeeded admirably among the ancient Nazarites and Rechabites. But to come down the stream of time—on the other side of our globe, right under our feet are four hundred and fifty million successful prohibitionists who say by the history of over two thousand years that prohibition does prohibit. Prohibition, both in law and in religion, sways to-day the en-

tire Mahomedan empire, and far-off India, before the British lion set his foot there, prohibited both by law and religion the use of all intoxicating drinks. Even the Mormons in our own country have successfully inhibited the sale of all intoxicants within the jurisdiction of the church. Shall it be said that the half civilized governments of the old world, the worshippers of Buddha and Josh and the superstitious and lecherous Mormons in our own country have made prohibition a grand success, while enlightened Christian America is unable to enforce such grand and philanthropic laws. For one I am not prepared to make any such concession. I believe that we can and will enforce prohibition and the day is not remote when it will be the law from Atlantic's rock-bound shore to the golden sands of the Pacific slope, and from the Canadian line to the sparkling waters of the beamy gulf.

We have many instances in our own country of successful prohibition. Vineland, in New Jersey, with its twelve or fifteen thousand industrious and prosperous inhabitants, is a standing monument not only of the triumph of prohibition, but of its inestimable advantages to the social and industrial interests of the people.

The town of Greeley, in Colorado, with its three or four thousand sobers, temperate and peaceable citizens, is another practical exhibition of the truth that prohibition does prohibit.

It is the stock in trade of the rumites to repeat that the Maine law is a failure, but the statement has been proven false so many times that none but the ignorant and unprincipled will repeat the trite falsehood.

Let us hear the testimony of the men who live in Maine, and who have watched the operations of the law, and whose opportunities for knowing as to whether it has been a failure or not have been ample, and see if they pronounce it a failure.

Hon. Neal Dow, the father of the Maine law, in a letter to the New York Sun, under date of Feb. 16th, 1881, says: From the day of the enactment of the Maine law of 1851 to this day, no incident has occurred to justify the declaration so often made that it is a failure. On the contrary, it has been, and is now in every way a great success.

In April, 1868, Hon. James G. Blaine, speaking of the prohibitory law said: The law is now as easily enforced as that for the prevention and punishment of any other and similar crimes, and I can sincerely affirm that it is a success.

One more witness must suffice, although we have many more. Under the date of August 3d, 1880, Judge Joshua Nye, one of the ablest jurists in the state of Maine, said: I have no doubt that in three-fourths of the towns in the state no liquor is sold. All political parties acquiesce in the law. We know so well here the benefit of the law and of its almost entire success that it seems like a joke to us when we hear of its being said in distant states that it is a failure. We know better.

There we have not only the opinions of eminent men thoroughly qualified to speak, but the deliberate utterances of state organizations, both declaring prohibition a triumph. How can men professing to be honest deny the practicability of prohibition in the face of such high authority as the foregoing? Until the enemies of prohibition can show that it is wrong in principle to prohibit the manufacture and sale of ardent spirits, and that such laws cannot be made operative, we shall settle down to the pleasing conviction that we yet hold the fort.

T. M. STEWART.

July 15th, 1886.

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