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Compiled by **ALONZO E. WILSON** and **A. R. HEATH**

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A COMEDY OF ERRORS

BY MAJOR JAMES A. DOUGLAS

It is hardly remarkable, in view of the fact that all sorts and conditions of "literary people" have been drafted into service to write articles about the "Prohibition wave," that we should have some curious and wonderful information thrust upon us from the pages of periodicals, the editors of which a year ago had never dreamed of the Prohibition movement. It has remained, however, for the *Broadway Magazine*, in its article, "The Greatest Problem Since Slavery," written by Carrington A. Phelps, to achieve the heights of the erroneous. Perhaps it ought to be said for Mr. Phelps that the matter that he puts before the public bears all the earmarks of having been obtained in a certain office located exactly between 108 and 112 East One Hundred Twenty-fifth street, New York, and he is probably not to blame for the total of errors that his article contains.

With a grim accidental humor the article is prefaced by an editorial note which announces that "This article gives for the first time, all the tremendous facts of the case in panoramic detail."

It must strike the most prejudiced reader as a highly remarkable thing that in the eight pages of his article, Mr. Phelps never once mentions the Prohibition party, and that the names of only two people ever connected with the Prohibition party appear, Frances Willard and Neal Dow. Even when the election of Mr. Dan R. Sheen to the Illinois legislature from the whisky city of Peoria, is mentioned, Mr. Sheen's name is suppressed and the incident is distorted as the election of "an Anti-Saloon League man."

To note the numerous errors in detail would be impossible within the scope of this article, but a few of the more glaring may be pointed out. On page two hundred eighty-seven, talking about what Mr. Phelps calls "the drunken period of American history," he says:

"Everybody drank. The annual consumption of malt and alcoholic liquors was fifty quarts to the family, or about double what it is now."

If Mr. Phelps had indulged in the unusual exercise of "reading up" on his subject before writing his article, he would have discovered that the present per capita consumption of liquor in the United States is 23.53 gallons. According to the last census the average American private family contains 4.6 persons. This gives a per family consumption of 108.238 gallons per annum, or a minute fraction less than 433 quarts. Further than this, if Mr. Phelps had consulted the United States Statistical Abstract he would have discovered that never in the history of the country was the per capita liquor consumption so great as it was during the latest fiscal year, and that in 1840, which is supposed to lie in the depths of the "drunken period," the total per capita consumption of all kinds of liquors was only 4.19 gallons.

Upon the same page Mr. Phelps perpetrates a slander upon the memory of Dr. Billy J. Clark. He says:

"Along in 1808 a New Yorker, named Clark, persuaded some forty friends to eschew liquor," and confine their attentions to beer alone."

However, one could hardly expect an amateur of Mr. Phelps' caliber to know that beer, in the sense in which we understand the term today, was practically unknown in the farming community where Dr. Clark formed the first temperance society, and that the chief reason for its omission from the pledge was the fact that it was not in common sale nor a common drink for intoxication, and that the only appearance of anything bearing the name "beer" was in the home-made brews of the housewives of the neighborhood. On page two hundred and eighty-

eight, speaking of the work of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Mr. Phelps says:

"One of the greatest weapons employed by the W. C. T. U. was the introduction of 'effects of alcohol' literature into the school-books. Most of this literature was exaggerated and so much of it not founded on scientific fact that some ten years ago it was investigated and corrected by a committee of fifty, appointed largely through the efforts of temperance leaders."

It is hardly worth while at this late date to point out in detail Mr. Phelps' mistakes in this matter. In no essential particular was the school literature endorsed by the W. C. T. U. ever found to be exaggerated or inaccurate. The investigation by the "Committee of Fifty" was not an investigation but a hostile attack from pro-liquor interests, the "Committee of Fifty" being an organization, not appointed by temperance leaders but self-appointed from among drinking men hostile to the Prohibition idea. Nor were the text-books in question ever "corrected" by those critics.

On the first page of his article, page two hundred eighty-five of the magazine, Mr. Phelps represents Ohio as having seventy counties voting "dry." In point of fact, not a single county has yet voted at all under Ohio's county option law, though a very few counties have probably now voted out the saloon in all their townships.

In the same paragraph North Carolina is represented as "likely to go 'dry' within a year," when at the time when the article was written a campaign was on in North Carolina, culminating in an election on the twenty-sixth of May.

Again speaking of New York, Mr. Phelps says:

"Out of nine hundred and thirty-three New York townships the Anti-Saloonists have made three hundred and twenty-four dry."

Probably Mr. Phelps did not know that New York had that many "dry" townships before the Anti-Saloon League was organized in the state. New York, June 13.

THE NATIONAL PROHIBITIONIST

A Veteran Worker Gives Generous Praise to This Paper's Efforts

Editor of THE NATIONAL PROHIBITIONIST: I see in *The National Prohibitionist* a most valuable tool for building our movement into organic form. I



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have had much experience in Prohibition newspaper work. When I ran a local paper it was almost a triumph if I could get hold each month of a half-dozen original items of Prohibition news. Your facilities are such that you get scores, if not hundreds, of such original news items every week.

I profit by *The National Prohibitionist*, because I see in its columns a resume of Prohibition progress over the entire field. Its statistics are strong. All in all, it makes me a better informed man.

Again, I profit by it because it keeps me close to the course of pure principle. It "sails by the stars." Its wise editorials keep me from drifting. Its demand for "Prohibition backed by a Prohibition party" seems to me to be fundamental. It speaks a logic which needs no apology. It has an aim. It seeks to get somewhere. It has no need to trim or veer with every whim of public sentiment. It holds that true principle is the advance agent of sentiment. It illustrates that a compass is a better guide than a weathercock. Such teaching is good for me.

Comparing *The National Prohibitionist* with other journals, I see points of superiority in it. The religious papers, having a larger constituency, are usually double the price, and yet the journalistic enterprise and news-gathering qualities are overwhelmingly with you. Even take *The Commoner*, in which Mr. Bryan appeals to an enormous constituency, its paper-stock is coarse and cheap, but its regular price is \$1 per year, while your special offer gives frequent opportunities for rates below that price.

For forty years Prohibitionists have worked on constructive lines, building up a platform ability, a propaganda of organization, and a literature. I regard *The National Prohibitionist* as the flower and fruitage of all this work, and I for one, am proud of such a journal to speak my views.

A. R. HEATH.
Chicago, June 16, 1908.

WHAT DID THEY SAY?

Editor of THE NATIONAL PROHIBITIONIST:—Here is what the Republican platform declares on the great temperance question:

"What does a man love more than life; Hate more than death or mortal strife; That which contented men desire; The poor possess, the rich require; The miser spends, the spendthrift saves, And all men carry to their graves?"

Ask a Republican if he can guess it.

H. F. DITTMANN.
Philadelphia, June 24.