

**AN OBJECTION MET.**

(Continued from second page.)

If alcoholic liquors were wholly bad and the result of their use invariably mischievous, not only to the user but to those living with his influence, the Legislature, might, without question, prohibit the traffic in them. But everyone will admit that within the sphere of medicine their use is followed, in very many cases, by results which are highly beneficial, both to the individual and to society. As there are many cases in which liquors may be used with advantage, even to the saving of life, so they may, undoubtedly, be used to a certain extent without positive harm, at least to society; and as to pure wine, we can never think that wholly bad, which was countenanced by the Pattern Man at the Marriage Feast, and selected for consecration in the most Divine Service of the Church of God.

The great difficulty involved in the question lies in this fact: that to a certain point the use of alcoholic liquors is advantageous, to a certain extent it is not harmful; beyond this limit—a limit not easily defined—lies the great and terrible evil to be guarded against by the State. The difficulty is complicated by the insidious operation of alcohol. It comes as a friend and in many cases it proves to be a real friend; it remains (if it be permitted to remain) to intoxicate the mind, to obtain control of the appetite and the will; and then it "bitheth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder."

Moreover, the traffic in it is, for the most part, in these latter days, in the hands of men who do not scruple to adulterate the liquors they dispense. The adulterated wines and other spirits obtained in the liquor shops throughout Canada at this time are not, it is safe to say, such as were countenanced and blessed by Our Lord, nor is the Liquor Traffic as it exists in this country, in any way comparable with that of the Holy Land. The adulterated liquors poison the blood and undermine the constitution, to the destruction of both body and mind. How many lives have thus been wrecked? What profession, what trade, what family has escaped loss and shame, trouble and misery, due to the misuse of alcoholic liquors? We have a law which prohibits murders, but the red hand of the murderer has not plucked the lives away from a tithe of the men who have lost their's by the use of alcohol. We have a law prohibiting theft; but all the thives that ever existed have not stolen so much in value as has been robbed on account of the traffickers in strong drink. We have laws prohibiting vices of various kinds; but the misuse of adulterated and unadulterated spirits, resulting from the liquor traffic of these latter days, has caused more misery than all the other vices combined. Then, may not the traffic to which is due the loss of so many lives, and so much property and happiness, be prohibited, also?

It may be urged that there is a wide difference between drunkenness and such crimes as we have referred to. The drunkard injures himself; but in murders and thefts the injury comes from others. A man has a right to injure himself, should he choose to do so, but no one else has a right to injure him; and though laws may be made to prohibit others from injuring him, they may not be made to prevent him from injuring himself. To this argument the answer is, that a man cannot possibly live for himself alone. In the words of Mill, "No person is an entirely isolated being." It is impossible for a person to do anything seriously or permanently hurtful to himself without mischief reaching, at the least, to his near connections, and often far beyond them. If he injures his property he does harm to those who, directly or indirectly, derive support from it, and usually diminishes, by a greater or less amount, the general resources of the community. If he injures his bodily or mental faculties, he not only brings evil upon all who depended upon him for any portion of their happiness, but disqualifies himself for rendering the services which he owes to his fellow-creatures—perhaps, becomes a burden upon their affection or benevolence; and if such conduct were very frequent, there is hardly any offence that is committed but would detract much from the general sum of good. Finally, if by his vices and follies a person does no direct harm to others, he is, nevertheless, it may be said, injurious by his example, and ought to be compelled to control himself for the sake of those whom the sight and the knowledge of his conduct might mislead. And even if the consequence of misconduct could be confined to the vicious or thoughtless individual guilty of it, ought society to abandon to their own guidance those who are manifestly unfit for it? If protection against themselves is confessedly due to children and persons under age, is not society equally bound to afford it to persons of

mature years who are equally incapable of self-government? If drunkenness is more injurious to happiness and a greater hindrance to improvement than many or most of the acts prohibited by law, why (may it not be asked?) should not law, so far as it is practicable endeavor to repress it also.

The liquor traffic is dependent for the most part on the habits of society. For men drink not for themselves or for their own gratification, merely, until the strong appetite which demands stimulants has been acquired. But men meet together, and take a social glass together, and have a good time together, maintaining in this way the liquor traffic and making drunkards of themselves. Thus dependent upon society for existence, the evil results of the liquor traffic react upon society. Consider the time lost and the money squandered on account of it, and how much better off society might be if it were abolished; consider the crimes that are committed because of it, and what the community suffers in consequence, the prisons and poor houses which the State has to maintain on account of it; consider the misery which it entails upon those members of society who are near and dear to its victims; consider the precious lives which it cuts short—lives which are lost to society,—and it must be admitted that it is one of those things which conflicts with the rights and interests of society, one of those things in respect to which the liberty of the individual ought to give way to the good of society; one of those things in respect to which society is justified in taking away the freedom of the individual and in enacting a prohibitory law.

It will have been observed that while Sir William Blackstone condemned the law which forbade the fine gentlemen to wear pikes upon their boots as one that savored of oppression, he justified the law which prescribed woollen dresses for the dead on the ground that it encouraged a staple trade of the nation. It seems to us that the prohibition of the liquor traffic might be justified on much the same ground; for the wealth of the country would be materially increased by the stoppage of the habit of drinking liquor as a beverage; and if the liberty of the subject may be interfered with for the encouragement of the staple trade of a nation, surely it may be interfered with for the purpose of saving the time and money, of preventing the loss, pain, sickness and premature death, of avoiding the expense of maintaining prisons and poor houses, which would result from the annihilation of the liquor traffic.

But, it may be asked, why should a man who can use liquor in moderation and unharmed be compelled by law to give up his liberty to do so? He might, he ought, as a Christian citizen, to do so of his own free will. But should the law stand between him and his desire to buy and drink? This is an important question. On the one hand it is certain that the State has no right to interfere with a man's liberty unless he does that which injures society; and the mere drinking of a glass or two of liquor per day injures no one. On the other hand it may be urged that drinking, even in moderation, does no healthy person any good, though it may be used with good effect in cases of illness, accident or other emergency; (2) that drinking in moderation is productive of all drunkenness; (3) that drunkenness is exceedingly injurious to society; (4) that that which lies at the root of the liquor traffic must be cut away if the evils which spring from drunkenness shall be abated; and (5) that the State may, therefore, deprive a man of his liberty to drink in moderation.

The medical profession, as a whole, class alcohol as a strong drug from which

a healthy person can receive no good and may receive much harm. This being so, it seems to us that the State may, without unduly exerting its power, interfere with the liberty of individuals to drink alcoholic liquors in moderation, seeing that all the evils to society, resulting from the liquor traffic, rest upon the foundation of what is known as "moderate drinking."

It is conceded that the State has the right to set limitations to the liquor traffic—to hamper it by conditions as to how, when, where, by whom and to whom alcoholic drinks shall be bought and sold; and if the State has the right to do this, on what principle should it be restrained from prohibiting it altogether?

But it may be urged that by prohibiting the liquor traffic the State will but whet the appetite for alcoholic stimulants, that revenue will be lost which will have to be made up in another way, that breweries and distilleries now in the trade may claim indemnity; that smuggling and illicit traffic in alcoholic drink will be induced. These are questions of expediency and of detail. They are of more or less importance and must, of course, be considered by the practical statesman. What the people called upon to vote in the Plebiscite have to be sure about is the right of the State to interfere with the liberty of the individual in respect to the liquor traffic and to what extent the right may be enforced.

Upon a brief review of the whole matter it is evident that while prohibitions are exceptional, both in the Christian dispensation and under the British constitution, and while the evils that spring from drunkenness would be much more satisfactorily abated by a general free-will abstinence from the use of alcoholic liquors as a beverage, the liquor traffic of this country may well, under all the circumstances, be prohibited by law,—provided regulations be made under which liquors can be quickly and easily procured in cases of illness. We conclude that prohibition is, at all events, worthy a trial.

—Work on the new Prince of Wales College building has been stopped. It is easy to understand the reason why. But what is the Government going to do about it? Perhaps the Patriot will explain. By the way, didn't the Patriot maintain that the contract was all right? If this were so, surely the first important act of the new Premier would not be to stop work upon it. The Premier's act—whatever may result from it—is a confirmation of THE EXAMINER'S contention that the contract was bad for this country.

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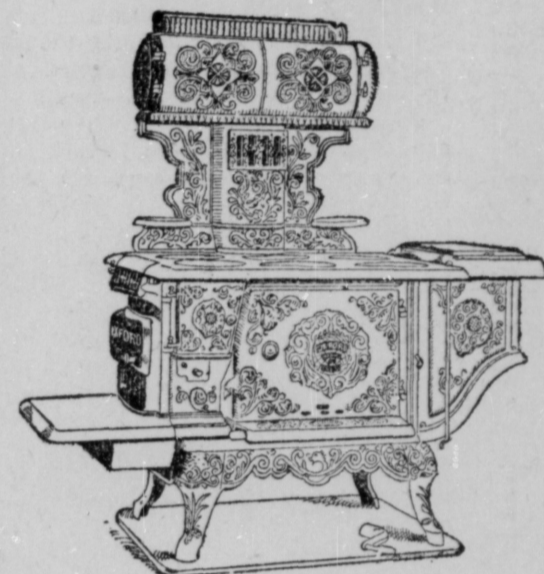
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