

THE REGULATION OF THE LIQUOR TRAFFIC IN ENGLAND

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Until 1853 liquor shops in Great Britain were open day and night under no time-limit restrictions. In 1854 Sunday closing was secured for Scotland and the hours of sale in England were limited. Ten years later an act was passed forcing liquor shops to close the sale of intoxicants at midnight. In 1872 the hours for the sale of liquor in all public houses were reduced by twenty-four hours a week. In 1881 the Welsh Sunday Closing Act was passed, also an act prohibiting the serving of spirit rations to youths in the navy. In 1882 the passing of the Licenses Amendment Bill led to the refusal of a large number of beer-house licenses. In 1883 acts were passed which prohibited the payment of workmen's wages in drink shops and the use of drink shops as Parliamentary election committee rooms.

In 1886 a bill was passed which checked the sale of intoxicants to children; 1887 the Truck Bill prohibited the part payment of agricultural laborers' wages in drink, and the Scotch Early Closing Act closed every liquor shop at ten p. m. in towns of less than 50,000 people. In 1897 the Irish Sunday and Saturday closing bill was passed. In 1901 the Child Messenger Bill made it illegal to serve children under fourteen years of age excepting in sealed vessels.

Many other acts have been passed, but the above list gives the general trend of temperance legislation. In 1904 the Conservative Government passed an act which gave the licenses to the brewers. For nearly 400 years the brewers had been recognized to be the property of the nation. This serious retrograde movement we are now trying to retrieve.

Attempts have been made in the direction of municipal regula-
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tion. A scheme, under the erroneous name of "disinterested management," was five years since pushed by some old-tried temperance leaders, but the temperance societies disassociated themselves from endorsing a propaganda which if carried into law would have made the people generally share in the profits of the traffic. Since the money would be diverted from brewers and shareholders to companies which after receiving dividends for the money they had invested, would use the surplus for public parks, almshouses, etc., it was felt that the scheme would popularize the traffic.

I have several times visited Norway and Sweden and investigated the working of their municipalization laws. An impartial scrutiny has strongly turned me against all such schemes, which corrupt citizens by creating a partnership between them and the liquor traffic. So strenuous opposition of our temperance societies has prevented any such mischievous anti-temperance laws being adopted by our Parliament.

To-day we are facing the most serious situation our nation has ever been called upon to meet. Our brave government has introduced a licensing bill which has the support of all temperance organizations and which the liquor party and the powers of evil in this country are opposing most unscrupulously. The bill, if carried into law, will handicap a traffic which is creating such enormous evils as no legislation has ever done. It would directly lessen disease, crime, lunacy and pauperism and the general physical and mental deterioration of our people for which drinking habits are so largely responsible.

What the Licensing Bill Proposes

The licensing bill of 1908, introduced by Mr. Asquith on behalf of the government, contains forty-seven clauses, and included in its provisions are the following:

1. *A time limit* of fourteen years, from April, 1909, to the compensation clauses of the act of 1904. At the end of fourteen years all licenses are to be considered new licenses—subject to payment of monopoly value.

2. *Reduction of licenses.* A gradual and compulsory reduction in the number of licenses, so that at the end of fourteen years they shall not exceed one license to every 400 persons in country places. In towns, the proportion is to vary between 1 to 500 and 1 to 1,000 of the population. Extensions of licensed premises to be liable to pay monopoly values.

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3. *Sunday sale of drink* in the provinces to be limited to one hour in the day time and two hours in the evening. The bona-fide traveler will have to go six miles instead of three before he can be served with alcoholic drink.

4. *Magisterial discretion.* The power taken from the licensing magistrates by the 1904 act to be restored and enlarged—thus, the local licensing authority will be enabled to impose conditions on licenses regarding Sunday closing, consumption on the premises; closing on election days, exclusion of children from drinking bars, the employment of women and children, the long pull, etc. The appeal to Quarter Sessions is to be abolished in large boroughs, such as Leeds.

5. *Compensation.* The levy for compensation is to be national and compulsory. A better method of assessment is to be adopted, and the licensee will, under this bill, be better treated than under Mr. Balfour's act. In introducing the bill Mr. Asquith said: "I think the interests of the tenants, of the actual license holder, the man who is carrying on a public house, were very unduly considered, the license holder got very little out of the compensation; the great bulk of it has gone into other pockets."

6. *Local option* is to be applicable immediately to new licenses, and the same principle shall after the termination of the reduction period become exercisable in such manner as Parliament may determine, both as to prohibition and as to the limitation of the number of licenses.

7. *Clubs.* The freedom of clubs is interfered with as little as possible, but power is given to the justices to stop bogus drinking clubs.

8. The bill also deals with the abuse of beer-hawking, control of off-licenses, betting on licensed premises, sale of drink on passenger vessels, and other points of immediate and practical value.

By reducing the number of licenses drunkenness would quickly decrease. In Liverpool, in 1889, 16,042 persons were charged in court for drunkenness. Between the years 1889 and 1901 339 drink shops were closed and the drunken cases fell to 4,327. The chief constable stated this remarkable reduction was due to the decrease in the number of licensed houses and the stricter supervision of licensed houses.

We are working for the non-employment of women in drinking bars. At the age of twenty-five most of the barmaids are discharged, and the physical and moral unwholesomeness of their employment unfits many of them for future useful careers. We are urging the government to strengthen the clause of the bill referring to children so as to make it statutory that no child can enter a public house. They can go and buy liquor in sealed vessels. The associations of our drinking places have a contaminating influence on the children of our country.

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The British Women's Temperance Association has 120,000 members and Scotland 70,000. Both societies are affiliated with the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union. The white ribbon movement is growing rapidly stronger in Great Britain. Drinking is increasing amongst the women of England, and this is one of the most potent causes of degeneration which is leading men and women to be easy preys to drink and which wrecks character, home and national health. The greatest problem of a country is its home life. It is the keynote of all effort and is the heart of every social problem.