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From the N. T. Nation; A correspondent asks us for a confession of faith as to the possibility, or, if possible, the expediency of preventing the sale of alcoholic drinks, being prompted to do so by having perceived what he considers indications of hopelessness about it on our part, and by the increasing zeal of the prohibitionists in his own neighborhood. We supposed that our opinions on this point were pretty well known to such of our readers as cared anything about them, and were much interested in the question. We have not only, however, no objec-tion to saying out fully all we have to say on the subject, but are glad to be furnished with

an excuse for saying it. We are opposed to prohibitory legislation, and consider all time spent in agitating for it almost wasted, first and foremost, because we believe no such legislation can be effective. In a certain sense, of course, this may be said of all legislation. No law is ever completely enforced; but a law prohibiting the sale of alcoholic liquors would, we believe, be disobeyed and evaded to an extraordinary degree, and by a large number of persons of good character who usually do obey the law faithfully; and, as a consequence of this, the proportion borne by the violations of it to the penalties inflicted for violating it would be so large as to weary the officers rapidly, and consign it to total desnetude. All laws in every country require a fair amount of support from public opinion to ensure their execution. This is true even of laws which affect matters in which only a small portion of the community has any personal interest. It is doubly true of a law like this, which would be highly inquisitorial in its operation and involve incessant interference with the habits and inclinations of persons of ordinarily good repute. Suppose seven against five to represent the majority whose support is necessary to ensure the enforcement of a piece of ordinary legislation, and it is safe to say that a prohibitory liquor law would need the support of a majority of eleven to one. If you could count on such a majority, however, liquor selling would be so thoroughly disreputable that either no legislation would be necessary for its suppression or there would be no opposition to it, and, therefore, none of the incessant discussion of its expediency which now goes on. The traffic would be given up to justice as readily as brothels and gambling-houses are, and the only debates to which it would give rise would be debates about the discipline and efficiency of the police.

If you ask the reason of the great difficulty which its advocates experience in procuring this legislation, the answer is, strange as it may seem, that the mass of mankind, including some of the best and purest of the race, do not believe the drinking of alcoholic liquor to be wrong; in fact, a vast body of them, in all countries, truly and sincerely believe it to be beneficial. The great majority have from the earliest ages been, in fact, moderate drinkers. No race or nation has yet been lighted on of which the great body of the males do not take stimulants in some form or other, not only without shame or fear, but with great gusto; indeed, the taking of stimulants is associated in their minds with the happiest moments of their lives. with births, with weddings, with the meeting of friends, and so on. The "drinking customs of society," to use the teetotaler's phrase, are, in short, apparently as old as the race itself, and may be almost said to have worked themselves into the very constitution of human society. We do not say that this is a thing to be rejoiced over, or a thing not to be deplored. We simply say that an attempt to eradicate such a habit suddenly by legislation would, in any country, be hopeless enough to make it seem ludiorous. No habit so deeply rooted has ever been eradicated except by the influence of an accepted and revered prophet. Mahomet is the only prohibitory legislator who has ever succeeded, but he succeeded not as a prohibitionist, but as the founder of a new religion among a barbarous people. We could imagine liquor-dealing and liquor-drinking being swept away, here, by an outburst of moral or religious enthusiasm, in the nature of "a revival," if it were not that no communities are ever swept by storms of this kind which are not homogeneous. The American community now anything but homogeneous. It is scored in every direction by differences of origin, religion, temperament, antecedents, and habits, and though you might light your fire very successfully among native Americans, and especially New Englanders, and make it blaze fiercely here and there, it would speedily be arrested by German and Irish patches, on which the flames of great "moral ideas" would find nothing to feed them. Moreover, there is little or no doubt that, for other reasons than this, "great uprisings" on moral or social questions will never again be seen. The intense publicity and intense activity of modern life, and the incessant criticism which results from publicity, have made them impossible, except where there is within reach some such sudden and energetic mode of expressing feeling as taking up arms. The work of reform, like the work of charity, is done more and more every day in cold blood, with books of statistics on the table. There are, however, features in American society and manners which make prohibitory legislation here seem more objectional than in any other country within our knowledge. The manners and traditions of the people make all police interference with their habits peculiarly odious and offensive. They are not broken into it as Europeans are, and, though the custom of drinking in barrooms, which prevails here to an extent unknown in Europe, makes it apparently very easy to put a stop to liquor dealing by merely closing the bar-rooms, we must remember that bar-rooms exist because they are convenient and lawful; close them, and the habit of secret drinking in houses will at once spring up, and has sprang up wherever they have been closed, as in Maine and Massachusetts; or, in other words, our drinking customs will be to some extent assimilated to those of the Old World, and our police would then find itself face to face with a more serious problem than any with which a European police has to deal.

But here, again, we come upon the greatest difficulty of all. We have no police or anything worthy of the name of a police, and worse still, or better still, if you will, we have not the means of making one. A good police, by which we mean a force of vigilant, exact, methodical, shrewd, cunning, unscrupulous, and disciplined men, is hardly possible in the United States at present. Partly owing to the condition of the public mind with regard to the service of the State-or, to use the term most in vogue, the civil service-no man can be got to give himself an to this service with the thoroughness and selfabnegation of a European. All the habits, and antecedents, and social surroundings of an American unfit him for it, and he not supported by public opinion in attempting it. There is a very good side to this American peculiarity, but it is fatal to the suppression of the liquor

WHY WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN PROBLE | traffic. A force fit to put it down in any | living in a fine house, because the desire of EITION. | State of this Union would have to contain an | luxury brings so many traders and cashiers to amount of probity, self-sacrince, devotion, and discipline which those who undertake the business of hunting up rum in other people's drawers have not as yet displayed on this continent, and are not likely to display. We do not need to enumerate here the objections to a law which cannot be enforced, especially in a community whose order and happiness are dependent so largely on the popular re-spect for law, and, above all, on the popular loyalty and honesty in obeying the law, as this is. This opens up a very wide field, which, however, anybody can explore for

We are far from believing, however, that nothing can be done by law for the diminution of drunkenness. The liquor traffic cannot be abolished, and, in saying this, we do not take into account the spasmodic cases in which a town here and a county there has spilt a great deal of liquor, and stopped drinking for two or three weeks. But the traffic can be regulated, we believe, even with the machinery at our disposal, so as greatly to lessen the temptation to drink, and thus lessen the amount of crime caused by drinking, which, after all allowance has been made for the exaggerations and misrepresentations to which temperance advocates are, for some inscrutable reason. very prone, is undoubtedly large. In fact, all the advocates of prohibition claim that for their experiment, wherever it has been made, is that it does regulate and diminish drinking, not that it stops it; but this is dearly purchased by the creation of a habit of contempt for the law which illicit drinking surely creates. The great difficulty in the way of this regulation is everywhere in the Union to be found in the habits and character of the political class, which are too low to make effective dealing with so corrupting a question possible. Political reform, including reform of the civil service, lies at the back of temperance reform, and we believe we shall never see the liquor question reached in a rational and scientific manner except through a purification of the official class, both State and Federal. What, then, "Truth-seeker" may ask, do

we look forward to as the final solution of the temperance problem? Do we really think that the world is fated to remain as drunken as it is now? Nothing of the kind. We believe the time will come when drunkards will be as rare as thieves or swindlers, and as disreputable, not because the decent people of the world will be all teetotalers, but because those who drink at all will be "moderate drinkers." We think the notion that men will ever give up wine and beer as a great moral duty is as wild a dream as has ever entered the brains of an agitator. We know that intemperance has greatly diminished under the influence of education and other moral and social agencies; we believe it will continue so diminish, under the same influence, until drunkenness is as rare as is every other form of indulgence; and to strengthen the moral and social agencies which do notoriously diminish drunkenness, is the temperance man's first duty. Everybody who asks himself why the custom of getting drunk after dinner has disappeared from among the upper classes in Europe; why ministers do not go and guzzle in their idle hours at taverns, as many workingmen do; why a German artisan can confine himself to drinking beer through an evening at a public garden with his wife, instead of getting madly drunk on whiskey, as the Irishman does, will, if he tries to answer his own questions, get a great deal of light on the subject.

All that has been done for temperance in the world as yet, has been done by persuading men not to drink, or giving them better things than drinking to do; nobody really believes legislation could ever have done as When you get into a man's head and heart, you hold his will, which the policeman can never do, and it is through this will that drunkenness is to be conquered. The present movement in favor of prohibition we look on as one of those outbursts of impatience with objectionable practices in which the good people of the world have indulged every now and then ever since governments were set up. Nothing is harder than to refuse to use the powers of government to stop people's doing what you don't like, when you think those powers are within your reach. This is a feeling which has been at the bottom of all that legislation in aid of morals and religion from which the world has suffered so greatly, so much of which is now recognized as barbarous and inhuman, and so much of which we laugh over as siliy It has taken fifteen hundred years of experiment to satisfy us that men cannot be made pious by law; it is not wonderful, therefore. that in many places the faith should prevail that by law they will eventually be made sober,

There is nothing, however, in the lessons of history, or in what we see of the tendencies of society in our day, to warrant this conclusion. There have been three great attempts made in Christendom to police men into personal purity-Calvin's, at Geneva; that of the Puritans in England and America; and that of the Papacy at Rome. They have all failed, and failed hopelessly, and there is no chance of their ever being repeated. Moreover, the tendency of the day is against all coercion in aid of personal morality, or for the suppression of what Bentham calls the self-regarding vices. This is remarkably shown in the total change of views which has taken place with regard to the education of children, from which the infliction of physical penalties may now be said to have almost disappeared. In other words, self-restraint has begun to play a part in practical education which, much as has been preached about it, it was in old times never called on to play.

Lastly, there is nothing in history or human nature to warrant the conclusion that it will ever be possible to incorporate in popular morals a prohibition of acts in themselves harmless, based simply on the fact that excess in the commission of them is hurtful, and that some persons are guilty of this

There is no precedent or parallel for anything of the kind in civilized legislation. may be, and often am, ferbidden to do things which, though harmless in my case, would work mischief if all did them; but I am not prohibited from doing things which, if all did them, would still be perfectly harmless, lest some persons should do them in hurtful excess; and I am not likely to be. Whether, under the rules of Christian morality, I am my brother's keeper to the extent of being bound to refrain from acts of which his imitation may preve injurious to him, and, in other words, not only to set him a good example, but to practise asceticism on his account, and for his good, is doubtless a weighty question, but it is one which must be left to the individual conscience. No such theory of responsibility could be introduced into jurisprudence, without either making its application so sweeping as to be utterly intolerable, or surrounding it with so many modifications, and allowances, and restrictions as to make it farcical. Should a man, for instance, be prohibited from setting up a carriage, or

luxury brings so many traders and cashiers to frauds and defalcations? Should the police see that a pretty woman wears sad raiment and goes veiled lest the plain ones should be made envious or driven into vice? Should a man who is industrious take no vacation, lest his example should demoralize the indolent and idle? The subject, in short, has hardly as vet been discussed at all, owing to the extraordinary heat with which nearly, all those who are seriously interested in it approach it.

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And are fully prepared to furnish Builders and Mill Work of all Descriptions.

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FLORIDA FLOORING,
CAROLINA FLOORING,
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WALNUT FLOORING,
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RAIL PLANK, 1871

1871 WALNUT BOARDS AND PLANK. 1871 WALNUT BOARDS, WALNUT BOARDS, WALNUT PLANK. UNDERTAKERS' LUMBER. 1871 UNDERTAKERS' LUMBER. 1871 RED CEDAR. WALNUT AND PINE.

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PANEL PLANE, ALL THICKNESSES.

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Call and see stock and prices. CORDAGE, ETC.

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PROPOSALS.

IRON FOR LANDING PIER, NEAR LEWES, DELAWARE. United States Engineer's Office, Phila-Delphia, Pa., No. 1830 Chesnut Street,

SEALED PROPOSALS, in duplicate, of the form furnished by the undersigned, with a copy of this advertisement attached to each, will be received at this Office until 12 o'clock M. on MONDAY, the 12t h May 6, 1871. day of June, 1871, for the supply of Wrought and Cast Iron required for this work. The iron must be delivered on the railroad pier as Lewes, or at the works where made.

The bids will state carefully the proposed places

of delivery, with the corresponding prices,

There will be required for the pier about one million eight hundred thousand pounds of rolled and hammered fron, and about three hundred and forty thousand pounds of cast iron.

The present letting will be for about 600,600 pounds of wrought iron and about 140,000 pounds of cast Specifications and drawings can be seen at this

Office, where information will be supplied on appli-cation. Envelopes to be endorsed "Proposals for Iron." J. D. KURTZ, Lieutenant-Colonel of Engineers. QUARTERMASTER'S OFFICE, UNITED STATES ARMY,
PHILADELPHIA, Pa., May 26, 1871.
SEALED PROPOSALS in triplicate will be received at this office until 12 o'clock M. on MONDAY, June 26, 1871, for building a brick or stone wall, with one double and one single iron gate, at the following named NATIONAL CEMETERIES, viz.:

Culpeper C. H., Va., Fort Harrison, near Richmond, Va., and Beverly, N. J.

The rubbish resulting from the excavation for the walls to be removed from the grounds of each cemetery at the expense of the successful bidder.

Bidders will be required to specify the price per linear foot, and no bid will be entertained that does not conform to this requirement.

Plans, specifications, and blank forms for bids furnished by the undersigned.

BENRY J. HODGES. 530 ct Major and Quartermaster U. S. Army. FRANKFORD ARSENAL

PHILABELPHIA, Pa., May 15, 1871.

SEALED PROPOSALS in duplicate will be received at sais office until 12 M., June 15, 1871, for furnishing the fresh beef required by the Substance Department. U. S. A., at this station during six months, commencing July 1, 1871. Information as to condition, quality of beef, payments, etc., can be obtained by application to can be obtained by application to WILLIAM PRINCE,

First Lieut. Ord., A. C. S. COTTON SAIL DUCK AND CANVAS, OF ALD COTTON SAIL DUCK AND CARVAIS, OF ALL
and Wagon-cover Duck. Also, Paper Manufacturers' Drier Posts, from thirty to seventy and
arches, with Paulins, Belling, San Twing, etc.

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