

WHY WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN PROHIBITION.

From the N. Y. 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 with sad indications of hopelessness about it on our part, and by the increasing zeal of the prohibitionists in his own neighborhood.

We are far from believing, however, that nothing can be done by law for the diminution of drunkennes. 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 split a great deal of liquor, and stopped drinking for two or three weeks.

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 assassins, and as disreputable, not because the decent people of the world will be all teetotallers, but because those who drink at all will be "moderate drinkers."

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 much. 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.

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 Popay at Rome. They have all failed, and failed hopelessly, and there is no chance of their ever being repeated.

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.

traffic. A force fit to put it down in any State of this Union would have to contain an amount of probity, self-sacrifice, devotion, and discipline which those who undertake the business of hunting up run in other people's drawers have not as yet displayed on this continent, and are not likely to display.

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living in a fine house, because the desire of 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 his vacation, lest his example should demoralize the indolent and idle? The subject, in short, has hardly as yet 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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