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Thursday, March 21, 1889.  
**High License in Pennsylvania**

[BY THE REV. DANIEL DORCHESTER, D. D.]  
It is claimed that the High License law enacted in this State in 1887, and which went into effect in 1888, has done great things in reducing the saloons in Philadelphia from 6,000 to 1,300. Several things should be stated:

1. A letter to me from a judge in the Courts of that State says: "The law of 1887 differs in no material feature from the former license laws, save that the fees is somewhat higher; and, in Philadelphia city, the granting of licenses was taken from an Excise Board and put at the discretion of the Judges of the Courts, as it has long been in the rest of the State. In Philadelphia, under the Excise Board, sales were practically free. The granting of licenses was so vastly overdone as to cause a revulsion, and hence the number has been materially reduced under the new law."

2. This same judge further says: "There is no merit in the High License feature of this law: first, because it is not high; second, because there is no practical provision for reducing drunkenness with the attendant evils; and third, because it does not express the opinion of any portion of the people who will persistently enforce it."

3. No credit is due to "High License," which entered but slightly into the framing of the bill, the fees being, in the largest cities, only \$500; in cities of the next class, only \$300; in boroughs, \$150; and in townships, \$75. It is evident that such fees cannot cripple or restrain the liquor traffic.

4. The most objectionable feature of the law (a copy of which lies before me) are the conditions on which licenses are granted, cutting off many persons formerly licensed. It is said that in Philadelphia 2,500 applicants came with money in hand, but were excluded by the terms of the law, the prohibitory features which prohibitionists in the Legislature had engrained upon it, and without which it could not have been enacted.

5. There is no evidence that the volume of liquor consumed has been diminished. Brewers claim that they sell more liquor in that city than before, a much larger quantity of bottled beer going directly to private houses (no kitchen groceries) O no! If it were under Prohibition, would they not be thus stigmatized, and the existing saloons are said to do a much larger business, which is undoubtedly true.

6. The statistics of arrests in Pittsburg, as given in the *Pittsburg Times*, indicate no improvement in that city:

	Drunk.	Disorderly.
June, 1887	392	415
July, 1887	427	435
August, 1887	385	409
September, 1887	294	397
October, 1887	228	406
November, 1887	251	308
Totals, 1887	1,991	2,431
1888	1,391	2,277

Combining the two classes, we have 4,057 in 1887 to 4,268 in 1888, an increase of 211 under High License.

7. A gentleman writing me from Luzerne County says that, in a population of 150,000 in 1888, out of 531 applicants, 718 received licenses, or one for 209 inhabitants. Not much improvement upon the four license States, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Connecticut, and New Jersey, which, combined, averaged in 1887 one license for 182 inhabitants.

8. A writer in the *Congregationalist* says: "I am told by well-informed persons that there has not been the least change in this valley, from Carbondale to Nanticoke, with a population of nearly 300,000 people. In Carbondale itself there are 137 unlicensed saloons, as against ten licensed; and I am sure that the same is true in regard to western Pennsylvania. The law seems to be a dead letter outside of Philadelphia."

9. A large amount of money has been expended in Philadelphia to gild and beautify the saloons, which are now patronized by young men who never entered a low dive.

10. Moreover, the experiment is only a few months old in Philadel-

phia. Wait a few years, as in St. Louis, Chicago, etc., until the liquor power adjusts itself to the new conditions, and the evils of the High License regiment will become conspicuous.

11. *The Christian Statesman*, published in Philadelphia, after citing the figures now freely circulated in favor of High License in that city, says:

The advocates of High License throughout the country are heralding these figures abroad as powerful vindication of the superior efficiency of this method of dealing with the evil. But it must be steadily insisted on that High License is not the feature of the law which has operated to produce these results. They are due almost exclusively to certain well-defined Prohibitory features in the statute. Since such results are outlined above have followed partial Prohibition, what may not be expected from the complete abolition of the traffic. Every figure in the above returns is a powerful argument for the adoption of the Prohibitory Constitutional Amendment.

12. It is known that the action of the Courts in Philadelphia, in refusing two-thirds of the licenses applied for, involve so much of "colorable monopoly and favoritism" that it is doubtful whether it is sustained by public opinion. The judge before quoted writes: "Already attempts are being made, at the capital, to amend the law so as to emasculate it; and so it will ever be a football of the politicians and the legislators, as well as an apple of discord among the people. We want Constitutional Prohibition because it is consistent, progressive and permanent."

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