

Baltimore Evening Sun
April 22, 1910

Wars Upon Alcohol

The furious war upon the rum demon, now raging so noisily in the United States, and particularly in the sub-Potomac palatinates and satrapies thereof, has given many persons a strong conviction that the days of the old fellow are numbered—that, before many more years come and go, he will be a merely academic monster, with no visible dominion over our fair republic and no slaves among our people. Never before, they argue, has he been walloped so savagely and so skillfully. Never before, they argue, has he been walloped so savagely and so skillfully. Never before has he had to face organized and resourceful antagonists, with public opinion behind them and stringent laws to aid them.

Unluckily for the foes of alcohol, they are in error as to their facts, and it is only fair to suspect that they are also in error as to their conclusion. In reality, the present campaign against alcohol is by no means the first in the history of the world, nor is it the most vigorous. Far back in Roman times there were very ardent prohibitionists, and some of them had power enough to enforce their ideas. But the rum demon always outlived them. He was slain and slain, but his soul kept marching on, and as soon as the chance offered he inevitably returned to earth in a new incarnation.

A Primeval Governor Glenn

Argadus, who was sent into North Britain as Roman administrator nearly 1,700 years ago, was a sort of primeval Governor Glenn, with a vast enthusiasm for cold water and a hearty determination to make it the only tipple of the Scots.

He proceeded in the high handed fashion of his race and office. That is to say, he issued a decree against public drinking places and enforced it by confiscating their stocks and pulling down the buildings in which they were housed. All liquor sellers were banished. Any man caught drunk was beaten. On a second offense his ears were cut off. On a third offense he was executed. The manufacture of wine was a capital crime.

Later on, in many other countries, regulations of equal severity were in force. In the seventh century, as everyone knows, Mahomet forbade the faithful of India, upon pain of eternal damnation, to dally with the rum cup. Charlemagne, in 777, issued sumptuary edicts against drunkenness among the Franks. King Edgar of England prohibited the use of wine at weddings and wakes. A statute of Phillip and Mary sought to banish alcohol from Ireland. The Moors brought prohibition into Spain.

In later years, after experience had shown that prohibition laws, no matter how barbarous and certain their penalties, could not be enforced, efforts began to be made to

combat drinking by moral suasion. In other words, teetotalers banded together in societies and sought to make converts among the liquorish.

In the year 1517, one of these associations was formed by Sigismond de Dietrichstein, a German monk, under the patronage of St. Christopher, and before long it had thousands of members. A few years later the Order of Temperance was founded by Maurice, Duke of Hesse, and the Golden Ring, a secret society of tee totaling nobles, by the Count Palatine, Frederick Y.

A Spectacular Crusade

These societies, in the main, did not have prohibition as their aim, but merely temperance. The members agreed to limit their potations to avoid the drunken orgies so popular at the time, to oppose the besotting of the lower orders. But after the rise of Puritanism, actual prohibition began to be preached, and ever since the middle of the seventeenth century there have been active sects of rum scotchers.

The worldwide prohibition movement of the nineteenth century had its origin in the United States, where Puritanism survived long after it had died out in Europe. Early in the twenties a number of foes of alcohol began to petition the Legislature of New York for a repeal of the licensing acts, and in 1826, or thereabout, they came together in the American Temperance Society.

In a few years the society had thousands of members, and its work began to attract public attention, not only in the United States, but throughout the world. The Lord Chancellor of England, speaking in the House of Lords, lavished praises upon it; other members of Parliament came to the United States to study its methods.

Soon the British and Foreign Temperance Society was founded, monthly temperance papers were established in England, Ireland and Scotland, and branches were organized in places as remote as Hawaii, Hong Kong and the Cape of Good Hope. The infection spread to the Continent, Sweden and Prussia soon had active and powerful societies; even in Russia the movement gained a foothold, with no less a personage than the Emperor as its patron.

Then followed the spectacular crusade of Father Matthew in Ireland, and the doom of the rum demon seemed to be sounding. Hundreds of thousands flocked to the white flag; children in the schools were exhorted to "swear off" for life; drunkards by the thousands came wailing into camp. It was confidently predicted by the leaders of the movement that the cold-water army would soon sweep the world. In Ireland alone at the close of the year 1840, Father Matthew had 3,000,000 adherents.

Baltimore's Share In It

But the climax of the story was yet to come. In the United States many excellent citizens remained outside the breastworks. There were still saloons in every town, the laws of all the States permitted the manufacture and sale of liquor, in Congress there were gentlemen whose love of the bottle was well known. An organization was needed to complete the work of reform and it soon appeared, with Baltimore as its home.

Its founders were William K. Mitchell, a tailor; John T. Hoss, a carpenter; David Anderson, a blacksmith; George Streets, a wheelwright; James McCurly, a coach maker,

and Archibald Campbell, a silver platter. The six were all devotees of wine bibbing, and it was their custom to meet each evening for a friendly bout in Chase's tavern, on liberty street, near Baltimore.

One night a temperance orator was announced to deliver an exhortation in a nearby church, and the six friends decided to send a committee to hear him, to find out how much reason there was in his arguments. Four were told off for the mission—and they returned converted. Next day they converted the other two, and a week later the Washington Temperance Society was formed by the six.

The story of the subsequent campaign makes truly astonishing reading. Temperance enthusiasm spread through the country like wildfire. Hatred of the rum demon became a veritable mania. Within a few months the Washington Temperance Society had a branch in every American city and strong State organizations in all of the States. In New York alone 24,000 persons signed the pledge in a week. The original Baltimore society, when one year old had 4,600 members. In the whole State of Maryland there were nearly 17,000 and most of them, it is said, were reformed drunkards.

The roll grew day by day. In the Middle Western States during one winter's campaign 300,000 persons signed the pledge. The Kentucky Legislature signed in a body. On the very door of Congress the orators of the society were received as honored guests and applauded loudly. Half of the members of the lower body rushed to the clerks desk to sign the pledge. Even in the Senate whole days were set aside for rhetorical attacks upon alcohol.

Expected The Millennium

The leaders of the movement were full of hope. With 3,000,000 enthusiastic members at their back a woman's auxiliary of 5000,000 and 50,000 militant sons of temperance to aid them, they looked for the early prohibition by stringent laws of the manufacture, sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages. "Such a powerful impression had been made upon society" says the historian of the crusade. "and such a radical change had it undergone that many anticipated the near approach of the millennium."

But that millennium never dawned. Enthusiasm died out almost as quickly as it had been aroused. The prohibition bills introduced with such high hopes in the state legislature perished in committee. Sons of temperance began to be arrested for drunkenness. Congress went back to its . . . the apostates outnumbered the faithful, and the rum demon smiled again.

The Civil War completed the work. In the . . . that preceded it men forgot their . . . began to grow rich. All that remained of the great temperance movement by 1900 was a cloud of smoke.