

barous idea that labor is but a means of obtaining money or blackmailing the great society in which we all must live. There is a nobler ideal. Labor is the very nobility of men, the source of their joy and their healthy pride. The man who labors is of himself noble and beautiful. The artisan who loved his labor and sought to perfect it has, to the great chagrin of the world, disappeared. And because of his disappearance, the sum total of beauty in the world has grown less.'

'Do you not think that the debuts of young men of letters of to-day are less cordially received and make less of a stir than they did in your time? Has not the immense size of the reading public forced upon the new writers a certain mediocrity?'

'There is nothing fixed. The questions are always the same. Perhaps the flood tide of journalism has lowered the general taste; nevertheless, there is always a public for serious, intellectual work. I do not know what my work will be worth, I often have my doubts, but when I realize that such soberly written books as the *Sens de la Mort* and the *Demon de Midi* have each of them sold to the tune of over a hundred thousand copies, I cannot but realize that there is a large public for work of a certain tone. Perhaps a democracy does not favor the flowering of talent. But one must struggle, must struggle ever, must follow the path marked out by one's tastes and convictions.'

'What are you writing now?'

'Many things. I have written *Laurence Albani* for a review. I am working on a longish novel, *The Eleventh Hour*. I am always busy, and I live because I work. In a hundred years time, should they dig me up, they will know me by the inkstain in the bone of my right middle finger.

But enough of myself. Have you read in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the pages in which Pierre Loti speaks of his first youth? They are beautiful indeed. Listen to the first lines:

'Since my earliest youth, with boyish and despairing insistence, I have toiled to fix in words the fleeting world; in that vain and daily labor have I worn my life away. I sought to prevent the flow of time, to restore vanished scenes, to preserve old dwellings, old trees, to make eternal even those humble things which should be but a passing memory.'

M. Bourget continued to read from these pages in which another great writer of these times has voiced the melancholy of an ebbing life. So profoundly did M. Bourget feel the beauty, and the drama of the lines, that the reviewer himself shared his sincerity and his emotion.

[*The Review of Reviews*]

RELIGION AND DRINK

BY THE BISHOP OF HEREFORD

PROHIBITION is a modern policy, but it expresses an ancient fallacy. It is an attempt to cure a vice by destroying the possibility of its practice. If experience be worth anything as a guide to life, then this method is bound to fail. The vice may seem to vanish, but it will only have grown furtive, and when opportunity comes it will break out in more virulent forms. Prohibition only succeeds when it registers a conclusion of the general reason, and proclaims a verdict of the general conscience. Various cruel sports have been successfully prohibited, because there was a practical unanimity of reasonable men in condemning them. Dueling has been successfully prohibited because it offended the common sense of intelligent men. Drinking alcoholic liquors

will only be successfully prohibited when the practice has been generally abandoned. The law will then register the common will, and carry the sanctions of the common conscience.

It is notorious that at the present time, so far from the consumption of alcoholic liquors being generally abandoned, the precise contrary is the case among civilized nations. Total abstinence is an Anglo-Saxon eccentricity which has scarcely gained any following outside Britain and America. Historically it is very recent among Anglo-Saxons, and it has certainly not yet escaped from the disadvantages which attach to eccentricity. In America, for a variety of reasons, eccentricity has a freer scope and a more extensive influence than in the older and more civilized community of Britain, but even there it is practically certain that prohibition has commended itself less by its own merits than by its incidental advantages. The magnates of organized industry have realized the economic gain of temperance among their workmen, and they have readily accepted a policy which, while curbing the self-indulgence of the multitude, has not interfered with their own. The emergency of the war compelled the nation to accept large surrenders of liberty in the interest of efficiency. When production had to be hastened at any price, and the loss of time through drunkenness could not safely be tolerated, there were obvious reasons why the state should adopt a policy which promised an immediate escape from this source of military weakness. The circumstance that the great liquor interests of the republic were mainly in the hands of hyphenated Americans, whose hearts were not unreasonably suspected of being in the enemy's camp, facilitated the acceptance of the policy. There were other, and more normal, reasons. The women

and the clergy were generally in sympathy with a policy which restrained the mischievous influence of the saloon, an institution which in America has acquired a sinister reputation that has no parallel in the case of the British public house. Add that the climatic conditions of America are more friendly to total abstinence than the moister climate of Britain, and it need not surprise us that prohibition has succeeded in winning a dramatic victory at the polls, and that the great republic is for the moment 'bone-dry.'

But America, which has led the way in prohibition, has done much to discount her own example. For the futility of the policy of coercion in the interests of virtue has nowhere been more plainly exhibited. The devices for defeating the anti-liquor laws have for many years amused and scandalized the more law-abiding British, who have visited the United States. There seems no reason in the nature of things why the republic as a whole should fare better in this respect than its constituent states. Already the newspapers are full of cunningly contrived expedients for evading the new law. It is as certain as anything human can be that evasion will be widespread, and that the respect for law, which has always been deplorably weak among the citizens of the American republic, will be still further enfeebled. But even in its partial enforcement prohibition brings many evils. The rapid extension of the drug habit seems to be an infallible consequence of prohibition. It is a question whether the political mischief of evasion is a greater evil than the physical and moral degradation of the drug habit. Both are certain where prohibition exists.

If the habit of sobriety were established in the mass of the population, it might be arguable that even these evils might be endured since they

affect but a minority of the citizens. But our experience of American and Colonial troops, many of whom have come from communities where prohibition or its equivalent has been the rule, has led us gravely to doubt the value of the abstinence from excess which is insured by a removal of the opportunity of drinking. The military and civil authorities have had great trouble with the disorder and drunkenness of these troops. It would seem that they have little power of resisting temptation, and a very low level of self-respect. We must add that they have brought the pestilent habit of cocaine taking into this country. On the whole we are less disposed to look kindly upon prohibition since the experiences of the war have enlarged our knowledge of it.

Prohibition is a red herring drawn across the path of the social reformer. It promises large profits and quick returns. All its achievements are gained on the morrow of its adoption. No policy, therefore, lends itself to easier advocacy among those large classes of the community to whom statistics of results are the Alpha and Omega of convincing proof. But time discloses the defects of prohibition. Within a few years drinking proceeds in hardly less quantity than before, and in far worse forms. We prefer to solve our problem of drunkenness by sounder, though slower, methods. The improvement in the drinking habits of the British people during the last half century has been very marked. No one can mingle in the vast crowds which take their pleasure on a bank holiday, and not marvel at the general sobriety and good conduct. Many of us are old enough to compare with what now exists a state of things which was woefully different.

When I became Rector of St. Margaret's, Westminster, there were yet

living in the parish old people who could describe the disgusting spectacle of drunkards lying on the pavements which encountered them as they made their way to church on Sunday mornings. What member of our generation can recall anything of the kind? It was much the same in the North. I have moved about among the thousands of miners who crowded into Durham on the annual holiday, and I have wondered at the general temperance. The scenes of drunkenness and disorder, which older men have described to me, have wholly vanished. The evidence from every part of the country is the same. Drunkenness has diminished, and is diminishing.

The reasons are not obscure, and they have nothing to do with the crude tyranny of prohibition. Since 1870 our people have been in possession of a general system of education. Successive Acts of Parliament have improved and extended it until it has become an effective instrument of mental and moral discipline. Municipal government has become far more elaborate and enterprising. Parks, public baths, free libraries, better-lighted streets, vastly improved means of communication, have made possible a far richer and more varied life than was formerly accessible to the British artisan. The better wages and shorter hours of the workmen have raised their whole estimate of life. Only one great social improvement remains unaccomplished, the provision of better housing. When that has been effected (and the most elaborate plans are in making for the purpose) the main source of popular drunkenness will have been removed, and we may confidently expect a marked improvement in the sobriety of the people. In view of all these facts, what reason have we for turning away from the course of steady social advance, and taking up with this Ameri-

can folly of prohibition? We should be flying in the face of our own experience, and meriting the trouble which we should surely have to face.

So far I have considered prohibition from a purely civic point of view. But I object to it also from the point of view of a Christian minister. It is quite impossible for the Christian Church to endorse the prohibitionist assumption that alcoholic beverages are anti-social poisons which cannot safely be permitted in a self-respecting community. We should have to expurgate the Bible, transform the Holy Communion, and revise the Church Catechism, for all these take for granted that such beverages are good gifts of God, to be received with thankfulness by Christian men, and used with moderation. The low standard of education among the general body of the Nonconformists has given wide acceptance to the absurd notion that the wine mentioned in the Bible was not fermented, and it has even been argued that there was water and not wine in the Cup at the institution of the Lord's Supper. It breeds a kind of despair in one's mind when such absurdities can persist in circulation in spite of refutation renewed a thousand times. Argument is futile in face of fanaticism. The error must be left to die out before the steady influx of knowledge.

The unbroken practice of the Church from the first cannot be abandoned now at the insistence of a bigoted faction. Reverence for the Divine Founder of Christianity forbids an endorsement of opinions which, if they be sound, convict Him of a strange inability to judge what the best interests of mankind require. The Church of Christ is not an Anglo-Saxon institution. Throughout the greater portion of its membership total abstinence is unknown except as the odd habit of a

few sectaries. A temperate use of alcoholic beverages has been from the first, is still, and will certainly remain the habit of the general mass of Christians. The enactment of prohibition would precipitate a sharp conflict between Church and State. An exception for the purpose of Holy Communion could hardly meet the case. It would be too absurd for the law to prohibit as anti-social a beverage which was permitted in the central act of the Christian Religion.

There is also the consideration that the inclusion of total abstinence in the scheme of Christian morality must needs add a formidable difficulty to the Christian Message as it is presented in the world to-day. Already it is the case that large sections of the people have come to associate total abstinence so closely with the Christian profession, that they practically identify the two. To be a Christian, they think, must mean being a total abstainer. The habits of their class, and their own preference, make them refuse the last, and so doing they conceive themselves implicitly to refuse the first. I am persuaded that a formidable obstacle in the way of religion is here created by well-intentioned but mistaken Christian men. When we preach the duty of temperance, we carry the assent of every honest man's conscience, but when we preach total abstinence we raise up against us the common sense of ordinary men. It is impossible to exaggerate the gravity of thus throwing the general conscience into opposition. The secret of the continuing power of Christianity to win the acceptance of ordinary men and women lies precisely in the fact that the Christian demands are so plainly congruous with reason and conscience that to repudiate them is to do violence to both. Everything, therefore, that effects a breach be-

tween Christianity and the plain man's sense of right is from the Christian minister's point of view suicidal.

There are other considerations which go to confirm my aversion to prohibition, which I condemn on broad grounds of civic and religious principle. I think that prohibition is only likely to be passed in any Anglo-Saxon community by the female vote, and that fact will tend directly, not only to foster contempt for the law, but also to create an unhappy relation between the sexes. It will be extremely unfortunate if the voters are divided into parties on a sex-basis. Nothing could more effectually promote this unhappy situation than the passing of a prohibition law. The habits of the two sexes are, for intelligible reasons, very different on this point, and they are likely to continue to be different. Men and women will take a different point of view when they approach liquor legislation. The law will certainly be

passed, if it is passed at all, by women for men, and it will be resented the more for that reason. The resentment will find expression outside the political arena.

Prohibition can only be effective and socially innocuous if it expresses, not the success of a faction, but the settled will of the community as a whole. If its presupposition be sound (that alcoholic beverages are anti-social poisons), then the whole influence of the medical and teaching professions ought to be cast against them, and the self-interest of every individual ought to be engaged in the case. When such an unanimity of condemnation has been reached, there will be no need of a political agitation to abolish the consumption of alcoholic beverages. The ancient drinking habit of the British people will fall of its own accord. Until it does so, the cause of temperance had better be kept free from any taint of coercion.

[*Country Life*]

THE POPLARS

BY ISABEL BUTCHART

In stifling lane and garden bed
 The flowers droop, listless in the heat,
 O'er petals lying dead.
 The elms stand motionless. The fir's
 Hot scent hangs stagnant. No breath stirs
 Across the shining wheat.

But far above the flowers a-swoon,
 And far above the silent sheaves,
 From pallid dawn to languid noon,
 The poplar trees are whispering low
 To little secret winds that blow
 Among their murmuring leaves.
 The poplar trees are singing, throughout the sultry hours —
 Songs the cherished garden flowers
 Will never, never know;
 Songs the blessed harvest field will never, never know —
 Are singing to the little winds that flutter to and fro.