

The present license laws of Pennsylvania are notoriously discriminative and unfair against Philadelphia, in that they deny to that city the safeguards against an unlimited number of drinking places, which the enactments governing the other counties, in measure, afford. In the country districts a license to sell intoxicating drinks cannot be obtained, except through the Judges of the County Court and upon the concurrent petition of twelve reputable men of the neighborhood, who must aver that such a house is necessary for the public accommodation; that the applicant is of good repute for honesty and temperance, and has sufficient accommodations for travelers and lodgers. To this application all other persons may object by remonstrance or petition, and they are to be heard by the Court, which is to decide the case on its merits, in the discretion of the Judges.

Philadelphia had the protection of these, or nearly similar rules, until the year 1858, when the authority to license "drinking saloons" was delegated to the City Commissioners, without requiring the concurrence or consent of any of the citizens in the neighborhood where the saloon was to be located, and without public notice given, as theretofore required, and no obligation being imposed on the applicant to prove his ability to entertain or lodge the public who might require such accommodation.

The pernicious effects of thus sweeping away the wholesome restraints previously existing were soon manifested in a great increase of liquor saloons and tippling shops in that city, so that now there are four thousand seven hundred and fifteen (4715) licensed drinking places within its precincts. In some streets there are from five to eight such places in a single square, and intemperance has increased to a frightful degree, as is evinced by the statistics of crime and pauperism in Philadelphia, to which we would call your attention.

It has been computed from the information furnished by the last census that the people of the United States expend annually six hundred millions (600,000,000) of dollars for strong drink. Of this enormous waste Pennsylvania's share was seventy-eight millions (78,000,000) of dollars, expended for liquor, dealt out to her citizens at over thirteen thousand (13,000) licensed taverns.

There were, in 1870, nearly sixteen thousand (16,000) paupers supported by the State, and three thousand two hundred (3200) convicts for crime, three-fourths of whom, the lowest estimates show, were brought into that condition by intemperance. In the year 1867 there were thirteen thousand nine hundred and thirty (13,930) persons committed to prison in the city of Philadelphia for drunkenness, who were unable to pay their fines, and were incarcerated and supported at the expense of the city.

The Report of the Board of State Charities for 1871 says: "The most prolific source of disease, poverty and crime, observing men will acknowledge, is intemperance. The policy of giving license to certain parties to open taverns where intoxicating liquor may be partaken of and gatherings may be accommodated for their indulgence is now in vogue." * * * "It would be difficult to name any practical good which results from this system, unless it be that it furnishes a certain amount of revenue." * * * "What economist can fail to discern, without any elaborate calculation, that the State is impoverished by the whole transaction? There is received into the public coffers a small tribute, and the consequence is that there is lost from the Commonwealth the productive

labor of thousands, who waste in the licensed haunts of intemperance both the ability to add to her wealth and the accumulations of former thrift."

Judge Allison, in alluding to intemperance as a cause of crime, says: "There are few people who see the practical evil as we see it in the criminal courts of this city. There we can trace four-fifths of the crimes that are committed to the influence of rum."

The grand juries of the several courts in the State make these facts the frequent subject of their notice when presenting the more glaring causes of pauperism, crime and outrages upon the peace and well-being of the citizens they represent; while the courts themselves, through most of the causes tried before them, keep the debasing and destructive fruits of this vice—sanctioned by law—continuously before the public eye.

We have no selfish or political motive in thus addressing you. Our desire is, as professors of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and as sincere lovers of the State of which we are citizens, to express our abhorrence of the sin of drunkenness, and of a professedly Christian Government allowing the powerful temptation thereto to be so universally and constantly presented to the weak and unwary, thus often betraying them into guilt and death. Our voice is, therefore, thus raised against the legal sanction given to this prolific source of misery and crime, and against allowing the great body of the people to remain helpless to protect themselves from the grievances and unjust burdens imposed upon them by the vendors and partakers of intoxicating beverages.

The Holy Scriptures declare—"He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." And the Apostle James admonishes that—"To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." May He in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge so influence your deliberations and conclusions, that laws may be enacted to secure the removal of the evils we complain of, so that the best interests of the Commonwealth may be promoted, and the blessing of Divine Providence rest on your labors.

Signed by direction and on behalf of a Meeting of the said Representatives, held in Philadelphia, 2d mo. 17th, 1879.

CHARLES J. ALLEN,
Clerk for the day.