

WHAT PROHIBITION HAS DONE FOR KANSAS.

(By Charles M. Sheldon.)

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(The advantages of our Federal system of government is that every State is an experiment station, and proposed reforms may be tried out on a small scale, say, on a million or so, and the results watched by the rest. Prohibition was such an experiment when it was tried in Kansas a generation ago, and the results have been such to satisfy the people of that State and to induce many others to adopt the same policy. The Rev. Dr. Sheldon knows his State, and his testimony as to conditions in Kansas is worthy of consideration.—Editor.)

So many lies have been told about Prohibition in Kansas, that many good people all over the country still believe the law is a failure. With persistent regularity the brewers' publications assert that under Prohibition more liquor is consumed in Kansas than under high license, and in the next breath they say that if the fanatical prohibitionists continue to pass their laws the liquor business will soon be doomed.

The Kansas prohibitory law has been a part of our constitution now for over thirty-two years. After nearly a third of a century of this law the following may honestly be stated as some permanent results:—

1. In a great majority of the 105 counties of the State the prohibitory law is obeyed and enforced as well as other laws. All laws are broken more or less in all the States. Murders are committed sometimes, even in New York, but no one insists on criticising the law against murder because murders continue. The prohibitory law has always been criticised because it does not absolutely stop every illegal sale of liquor. But why should the prohibitory law be expected to do more than any other law does? Based on the same principle as other laws, it is fair to say that prohibition does prohibit in Kansas. This does not mean that you cannot get a drink in Kansas, or that there are no places where drink is sold, any more than it is impossible for a murder to occur in New York, but it does mean that the prohibitory law is regarded as a part of the constitution, and accepted by the

people generally as the settled policy of the State.

2. After thirty-two years of prohibition in Kansas the liquor business ranks with crime, and the man who engages in it is regarded as a criminal.

There are no respectable brewers in Kansas. A "jointist" is in the same class as a horse thief or a burglar. The young men and women of the State would no more plan to make liquor selling their occupation than they would plan to make a living of blowing open safes.

3. As a result of Prohibition in Kansas, the habit of social drinking has fallen into disrepute. It is probably safe to say that among the 1,600,000 people in Kansas more men and women can be found who never touched intoxicating liquor than in any other spot on the globe.

The use of liquor at receptions, banquets, and festive occasions generally is very rare, even political banquets are so closely watched that it is quite safe to say if any party in power in Kansas to-day should make a practice of putting even beer on its banquet tables that fact would be an issue big enough to vote the party out of power.

4. Not only is the social use of liquor infrequent and unpopular, but the use of liquor as a medicine is fast disappearing. I have questioned scores of young and successful doctors, and learn that a great majority of them never prescribe liquor for any case whatever. Towns all over Kansas of two or three thousand people are common where not a drop of alcohol in any form could be found in case of sickness. The drug stores are not allowed to handle alcohol for any purpose, and as a result it is safe to say a healthier lot of people than the average Kansans could hardly be found anywhere on earth.

5. The result of the prohibitory law has been so educational that practically every newspaper in the State is for the law and its enforcement. Of the more than eight hundred papers in the State I do not know of one that ever prints any liquor advertisements. During a recent editorial convention held in the State, at which one hundred and fifty editors were present, a resolution endorsing Prohibition, and praising its results, was passed by the editors

without a dissenting vote. It must be said for the press of Kansas that it was largely responsible for the enactment of the law. The papers joined hands with the churches and temperance organisations to create sentiment and form public opinion. As a result of that stand taken thirty-two years ago Kansas has to-day a newspaper constituency educated to understand the value of what was then won.

6. The economic results of Prohibition are sometimes cited first as being the most important. They are often demanded by opponents of Prohibition as if the whole principle depended on being able to prove a decrease in taxes or an increase in real estate values. Plenty of economic results of Prohibition in Kansas can be shown to any one who asks for them. The largest per capita wealth is in Kansas to-day. Kansas contains more people who own their own homes than any other State in the Union. She has the fewest paupers in proportion to her population—and all that—but, after all, the greatest and most valuable result to the State, the greatest thing that Prohibition has done for Kansas, is to establish the conviction with the young generation that the entire liquor business is an iniquity and an evil, without one redeeming quality, and that it is the business of civilised men and women to rub it off the map of the world.

The enactment of the Webb Bill, regulating the shipment of liquor into Prohibition States, has already proved the greatest help to local enforcement. The Mahin law, passed by the Kansas Legislature, and based on the Webb Bill, has resulted in cutting freight shipments in some localities down to a minimum, so that instead of trying to run a joint, law-breakers are now reduced to going to Kansas City with an empty suit case and bring it back full of whisky or beer. And when a saloon is reduced to the limits of a suit case by the rigor of the law, it will soon have no visible means of support.

If any reader of "The Independent" is doubtful about conditions in Kansas, and still thinks that Prohibition does not prohibit, or that the law is not enforced, I will pay his hotel bills in Topeka for a week if, after an honest investigation of conditions in Topeka, he is convinced that the law in the capital city of Kansas is a failure,