

THE DAVIE RECORD.

VOLUME IV.

MOCKSVILLE, N. C., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 1903.

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THE DAVIE RECORD

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY.

H. MORRIS, EDITOR.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION:
One copy, One Year, 75 cents
One copy, Six Months, 40
One copy, Three Months, 25

FACTS ABOUT THE LIQUOR QUESTION.

We give place elsewhere to a lengthy communication from the Rev. James Cannon, jr., in advocacy of the Mann bill. We have given more of our space to communications on this subject than we were called upon to give, but it is an interesting subject and an important one and we want all the light that can be shed. We should not care to say anything in reply to Mr. Cannon except that his communication appears to be an answer to certain editorials which have appeared in this paper and it may therefore be assumed that every proposition which Mr. Cannon lays down is a proposition opposed by this paper. We think it well therefore once again to state our own position on the liquor question in general and the Mann bill in particular.

In discussing this question, as in discussing all questions, we try to get at the truth. We try to ascertain what are the facts, and to place the facts well in mind in reaching our conclusions. First of all, then, it is a fact that alcohol is here; that it has been here from the foundation of the world, and that it will be here until all things have come to an end. It is a good thing in itself, and thousands and hundreds of thousands of people use it to their comfort, for its use to their benefit, and never to their hurt. It ought not to be abolished.

It is not wrong, per se, to take a drink of whiskey, nor is it wrong to sell whiskey. Some of the best men and women in the world take a drink of whiskey or wine occasionally, and it is absurd to say that they commit a wrong in so doing. There are reputable merchants in all parts of Virginia who sell alcoholic liquors, and it is absurd to say that they are criminals because they are engaged in criminal traffic.

These statements may be denied, but they cannot be disproved. They are facts and they are facts to be dealt with in considering this important subject. Another fact to be considered is this: That men have a perfect right to drink alcoholic liquors and they cannot under our system of government be deprived of that right by law. So long as they have that right many men will demand alcoholic liquors, and where there is an extensive demand in any branch of business the supply is sure to be forthcoming.

We must assume, therefore, that as it was from the beginning, so it will be to the end, alcohol will continue to exist, men will continue to sell it and so it all comes around at last to the question of regulating the sale in such a way as to supply a popular demand with least offense to those who are opposed to the traffic. Mr. Cannon, in his communication, asserts with much emphasis that a saloon is a public nuisance. If that were true there would be no need of the Mann bill or any other bill, for a public nuisance can be abated without special statutory enactment. Singularly enough, Mr. Cannon denies his own assertion. In one breath he says that a saloon is a public nuisance and in the next breath he argues in favor of the Mann bill,

which provides that a judge may grant a license to conduct a saloon, under certain conditions. Of course, a judge may not grant a license to a man to conduct a nuisance under any conditions. The saloon is not, per se, a public nuisance. A saloon may be conducted in such a way as to make it a nuisance (as some of them are), in which case it should not be tolerated. No man has the right to sell liquor or to drink liquor in such a way as to create a public nuisance.

It will be observed that we are still engaged in stating facts. We are not denying that the abuse of liquor constitutes a great evil; that it is responsible for much suffering and for much crime, nor are we denying that the greatest evil of the liquor traffic is in the open saloon. These are facts also to be reckoned with in considering the liquor question. But we cannot abolish alcohol and we cannot abolish the evils of alcohol. It is therefore merely a question of how to reduce these evils to the minimum. For our part we do not believe in prohibition; we do not believe in the doctrine of prohibition because prohibitionists are intolerant and they are undemocratic and too often they are fanatical. Nor do we believe in prohibition as an efficient means of getting rid of the liquor evil. It was tried in the State of New Hampshire for generations, and but recently it was abandoned in favor of high license. If it had been a remedy for the evil surely the Puritanical population of New Hampshire would never have abandoned it. But in spite of all that, we believe in local self-government, and we are willing that each and every community shall decide this question for itself. If the dominant sentiment in any community is in favor of abolishing the saloon, we are willing for our part that the majority shall rule, and were such a law in force in the community in which we live, we should obey it and uphold it. But we do not believe that it is wise to attempt to enforce any law which is not backed by public sentiment. To do so, is to tempt men to evade and defy the law, and that is more demoralizing than the evil which is sought to be abolished. Our main objection to the Mann bill is that it is not a fair means of ascertaining public sentiment, and we are clearly of the opinion that it is in violation of the spirit, at least, of the suffrage clause of the Constitution which provides that all elections shall be by secret ballot. To circulate a petition under the provisions of the Mann bill would be to all intents and purposes to hold a local option election, and the object of an election is to ascertain the honest sentiment of the people voting. In many instances you fail to get at the honest sentiment of a voter unless you put him in a private booth and let him make out his ballot without the eye of man upon him. It is one thing to vote in secret and quite another to sign a petition which will be filed as a matter of court record.—The Richmond Times-Dispatch.

The Richmond Times-Dispatch in discussing the liquor question uses logic and common sense. No great reform was ever accomplished by fanaticism, and intolerant methods. In legislating for a Republic like ours, the great masses have got to be reckoned with, the masses who are jealous of their rights, we do not want to be considered as opposed to temperance, for we are not, for we believe in being temperate in all things. We regard the Wats bill as anything else but a temperance measure, it is a political mousetrap, and will accomplish no good along temperance lines. There are dozens of evils existing in our country which cannot be cured by legislation and no need to try it. The character of our future men and women is made at home, by the parents in a great measure. Our people generally are too lax in their discipline with boys and girls. Allowing them to run at large as it were without restraint. Go to the majority of towns in this state or elsewhere and you will find crowds of

boys on the streets, congregated in places where they come in contact with the vices, and sooner or later, the character of the child is formed and when he grows up beyond your control a drinker and a bad boy, you curse the whiskey and charge it all to others. Keep your children as much as possible under your eye, and inculcate right views and principles, and you will nine cases out of ten, make him what he should be, and what you would have him be. The world is several thousand years old, and crime and criminals have not been suppressed by legal enactment. The capital felonies are on the increase yet they are punishable with death. You can lead the people in a free country, but you will meet with opposition if you attempt to coerce and drive them.

THAT FAMOUS LEGISLATURE.

The Motley Crew Had a Long Frolic—Drank a Good Deal of Liquor—Precious Little Done for the Glory of the State.

The Legislature has adjourned. We give the top of the morning to old Father Time. We shall be compelled to modify a previously expressed opinion of this body of law-makers. It is hardly worthy to be called a fairly good Legislature. There was a painful lack of leadership in either House or Senate. It was a motley crew that beat about in the dark like an army lost in the woods. There were some men of talent in both houses, to be sure, but no towering and commanding figure developed anywhere. As a whole the gentlemen were hardly average specimens of North Carolina state-manship. The record made by the Legislature on the one supreme moral issue was childish and unworthy. They were swept off their feet by the organized force of the liquor power. They made loud and high professions of loyalty to temperance but ran like rats when the time of testing came. We judge that never in the history of the State have the best people been so sorely disappointed, nor did the people ever breathe a sigh of more genuine relief when it was announced that the thing had gone to pieces and the members had scattered to their homes. They had a good frolic in Raleigh and drank a good deal of liquor, but precious little was done for the glory of the State. Of course we are speaking broadly of the body. There were some members of the illustrious aggregation who are as honest and faithful and true as can be found in the State. They found themselves overwhelmed by worse men and were powerless to stem the tide. But as a whole the General Assembly of 1903 will not be a very fragrant memory after its work has been carefully reviewed and its action carefully weighed by the people whom they were sent to Raleigh to represent.—Charity and Children.

A Smooth Sea.

A smooth sea never made a skillful mariner, neither do uninterrupted prosperity and success qualify for usefulness and happiness. The storms of adversity, like those of the ocean, rouse the faculties, and excite the invention, prudence, skill and fortitude of the voyager.—Exchange.

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