

# Speech of Clarence S. Darrow

Delivered Sunday, May 2nd, 1909.

Judging from the size of the audience, I would think there was something doing down here in Youngstown on the question of prohibition. It is strange how this fever spreads. I used to live up in this country and I never used to think prohibition would reach Youngstown (laughter); but you cannot tell, and here we are face to face with the proposition to vote Youngstown dry. Of course, you may vote Youngstown dry, but from what I know about it I hardly think you could vote the *people* dry. People are so perverse. If you could vote *them* dry, it would be a good scheme; then you would not have to vote the *town* dry.

Somehow the Lord never figured these things out the way the prohibitionists do. He left men, by learned experience, to stumble along the best way they could, and fall down and get up again, and go on the best way they could; gave them a chance to do right and a chance to do wrong and let them work it out. But the prohibitionist is wiser than the Almighty and he proposes to vote on it (applause.) He does not propose to let anybody settle it for himself; he is going to settle it for him. He is to appoint a committee and fix it up. It is too bad it was not thought of earlier in the game. We could have saved so many people from this and a lot of other errors when the world was younger.

Now, I always hesitate somewhat about making these wet speeches because I have a good many friends who are prohibitionists. I have friends that belong to—well, they believe in every crank idea you can think of, among them is prohibition—and I know how honest they are; I know how disinterested they are; I know how sincere they are; I know how anxious they are to save somebody whether they want to be saved or not—that don't make any difference (laughter); they are bound to save him by main force.

Considering how honest and sincere and high-minded they are, I always hesitate to say anything, not against them but against their religion; for it is a religion with these people. They believe in it as they do in their God—and I think a little more even than that—probably considerable more—and one hates to run counter to the opinion of a lot of people who believe things as seriously and profoundly as prohibitionists believe.

And this movement and this spirit seems to be awakened in the world without any perceptible cause whatever. The world has been getting more temperate; fewer men are drunkards now than formerly. It was not so many years ago that a business man would get drunk. Even lawyers used to get drunk; even preachers have been known to get drunk and it did not affect them so very much in their social standing. Not much more than it does nowadays for anybody to eat too much, and that does not affect social standing. Everybody thinks a man has a right to eat too much if he can afford it; most of them do if they can afford it (laughter.)

But it used to be they did not mind drinking too much; but nowadays if anybody is going to get drunk he generally hides himself. Politicians used to get drunk, but they don't do it much now. They might when they get to Washington, or Columbus, or somewhere away from home, but around home they don't. People have been growing more temperate for a good many years; they have been gaining character and independence and manhood. They have been trying to control *themselves* and work out this problem (applause.)

In a way, it seems as if the Almighty intended they should work it out by managing their own affairs; but now comes this great wave of prohibition; nobody knows the cause; there is no reason for it, excepting that ideas are like the measles and the mumps—they are catching. Men catch ideas just the same as they catch anything else. If ideas were not catching a great many people wouldn't have any (laughter.) Now they have been catching the prohibition idea, and they have got it bad.

This disease is sweeping through the country. Nobody can tell where it will end, but it will end just like the typhoid fever, or the measles or anything else; after it has run its course, the patient will get well or he will die, one or the other. So you get over it. And if you vote dry this time you will vote wet the next time; and probably you won't be so awfully dry after all.

I know there are a lot of good people who are so sure of this prohibition question that they cannot understand how anybody can believe anything else. They think nobody can vote against prohibition unless he is a saloon-keeper or a habitual drunkard, or owns a brewery, or is getting paid for making speeches.

They don't think anybody could possibly believe that the principle of prohibition is wrong. They are good; they know they are good, and they want to make everybody else just as good as they are.

Now goodness is all right. I haven't any objection to it, if you don't force it on to me (laughter.) Bad people have made a good deal of mischief in this world, but the plain truth about it is, that the bad people have not caused near as much trouble as the good ones.

It is the good people who are dangerous, and when you read history you will find that a bad monarch was generally so busy enjoying himself that he did not have much time to interfere with other people's affairs, so he left them alone and had all the fun he could himself; but when some good person, who bears a commission from the Almighty—some person who is dead sure of his own opinion; knows he is right; knows what is good for himself and what is good for everybody else—when such a person breaks loose on the world you want to look out for him; he is dangerous; he is bound to make everybody good even if he has to kill them in making them good (laughter.) He will take a jail, or club, or a scaffold, or build a bon-fire, or take any old way that comes, and, after he gets through, you are either good or you are dead; probably dead. Now, a good person who is good because he is afraid to be bad, does not amount to much anyhow, and that is the best you can say for this sort of affair; and if you read the history of the world, you will find that over and over again, its pages are drenched in blood because of the zeal of good rulers. They were bound to enforce their religion, their morals, their principles, their ideas of goodness, upon their fellowmen, instead of leaving their fellowmen free to work out their own salvation with fear and suffering.

And that is the difference in this proposition. It is not that we do not believe in temperance; it is a question of whether one shall manage his own affairs for himself or whether each individual shall undertake to govern somebody else according to his particular appetites and desires (applause.)

Now, it is a simple question. Of course, if a man has the power, and you set a pace for somebody else, it is easy; but if somebody else is going to set it for you then it is a little dangerous.

Men have various appetites, and various desires, as to food, as to drink, as to all the conduct of life; we do not see things alike; we do not feel things alike; we do not taste things alike. The question is: Are you the best judge for yourself or am I the best judge for you? Now, personally, I do not like chicken; I never eat it; and if I were fixing a bill of fare for the human race I would not allow anybody to eat chicken (laughter.) I do not see how anybody that has not got a perverted taste

178.5 2

D 254

129138

could ever eat it, but I have seen some very decent people who eat chicken; and if I were permitted to cut that out of the bill of fare of my fellow-men, pretty soon I would find some reformer that did not like corned-beef, then where would I be (laughter and applause.)

There is a lot of good people who do not like liquor, and think it is not good for them—may be it isn't. They think it is not good for them and therefore it is not good for us.

Now, I believe in tolerance. Even if I had the power I would not make a fellow drink whiskey if he did not want it. I am that liberal. Honestly I would not pass a law compelling a prohibitionist to drink a pint of beer for breakfast every day (laughter), and likewise, I object to him passing a law forbidding me to do it. I do not want it now, but I might if he passed a law. You cannot tell.

It is strange what a hold this question has upon the people. It seems like a simple question, and yet it is strange how easy you can convert people to prohibition; most of them are already converted to it; and yet I understand the reason. I understand the prohibitionists and why they think as they do and act as they do—as good and as high-minded a class of fanatics as ever lived on the face of the earth. I understand it because I used to be one of them. I was born up here in Trumbull County, and up in the part of the country where I was born there was not a saloon within a good many miles, and I never saw more than one or two fellows that ever drank anything. I never saw whiskey myself; did not know what it looked like; never saw more than one or two men that drank it; and they used to keep them around as a horrible example.

It was a prohibition town; so that when they drank, they drank too much; they had to get enough to last awhile. We always used to go to temperance meetings every Saturday night, and we used to sign the pledge. I suppose I have signed the pledge a thousand times (applause and laughter.) I used to sign a pledge saying I did not like beer, and I never would like it, and if I ever did like it I would not taste it; the fact that I liked it was good reason for leaving it alone; and I used to hear those temperance people; I can hear them now almost; I never heard any other kind. The only speeches I ever heard against prohibition were the ones I made myself. The other fellows have been doing all the talking, and they have talked so long that people have come to believe that there wasn't any other side to the question. 'I remember how they used to talk when I was a boy, and how I learned temperance. I used to catch it everywhere. I got it at home, and I got it at Sunday School—when I would go to Sunday School just before Christmas time; and I used to get it at church, when my people would drag me into church; and I got it out of the spelling books, arithmetic and geography; and I learned to write by writing prohibition texts at the top of the copy book—about drunkards and things—and I got it out of the reader. We used to have beautiful stories about what happened to a drunkard, and what happened to a man who did not drink, saved money, and all those things. I used to think that (and I used to be told) that a man couldn't take one drink unless he was lost; and I used to worry a great deal for fear somebody would drop a drop down my throat when I was asleep, or that somebody would smuggle a little brandy into a piece of mince pie (laughter.) I always believed them.

Of course, when I grew up, I got acquainted with people out of the town. You could not learn much there; it was a small place. When I got where I could go away from home, and got acquainted with people, I found there were a good many men who had drunk moderately all their lives and had not murdered their families; and I found there were people who drank beer and did not beat their wives; and even people who did not drink it and beat their wives; and I found there were men who drank whiskey and whose children had shoes; and I found some way or other, that some of those texts in the copy book were not true.

Of course, the most we do as we go along is to unlearn the lessons we had at school; and, like other things, most of the stuff we learned about the evils of intemperance were not true. We were not told that we should control ourselves—that we should build up our own character—but they set forth to do this for us; tie us up so that we could not go wrong; either lock us up or lock the whiskey up—that it would be safer to do both.

Of course, if a fellow has a chance to go wrong, he will go wrong. The only reason he don't go wrong is because he don't have a chance to go wrong. That is their theory.

After I got out into the world, I found a good many of those things were not true, and I tried to study this question, and I want to discuss it this afternoon as a question of logic: the philosophy of government. I do not care much about statistics. I want to say right here, as has been suggested by the chairman, you will get figures to burn before you get through with it. You will find out what happened to Kansas City, Kansas. I don't care what happened to Kansas City, Kansas. It don't make any difference to me; it can go dry or go wet, or go to the devil for all I care.

The question is: Is this the right thing or is it wrong? (applause) I am not interested in your taxes. If prohibition is right, why, I suppose you can afford to pay for it. If, under the proper theory of government, drinking liquor, or buying it, or selling it, should be classed as burglary, and larceny, and murder, I would not make money out of it even if I could, and I don't think the city ought to make any money out of it. I don't care what any other town may have done; I don't care whether it makes business good or bad; I don't care whether it pays or does not pay. The only question that interests me is this: Is it the right system of government, and does it make strong men and strong women?

That is the only issue that interests me now. If it is right we will pay the cost, whatever the cost may be. Now, I don't care for statistics. In following these meetings you will hear statistics until you are black in the face, and they don't mean anything at all. I used to work in a statistics factory and I know what they are. They aren't worth anything. Anybody can make them to suit any old case, and there are mighty few people who know how to use them after they get them. They are like edged tools in the hands of children. Unless you get something that covers a broad range, a wide generalization, they aren't worth anything.

This is a wide question. Pure and simple, as to the philosophy of government; as to the right of individuals; as to the judgment of the conduct of man by his fellow-man. It is a question purely of whether you had better mind your own business, or somebody else's business; and that is all there is to it. When in doubt it is always safe to mind your own business (laughter.) The trouble with the prohibitionist is, he is never in doubt (laughter.) He is sure of himself. It is the people that have been so sure of themselves that have made all the mischief in the world.

Now, this is a simple question, and I think I can say it in just one or two sentences: if I am of age—twenty-one—and have not got a guardian, and the law says I may have full power to buy a horse, or sell a farm, and to go and come, then I ought to have a right to go to the hotel and order my dinner and say what I want to eat and what I want to drink, and pick it out for myself. I ought not to be compelled to call a town meeting and have them vote as to whether I should have beefsteak or chicken (applause and laughter.) Likewise, I ought not to be obliged to call a town meeting and have them vote as to whether I was to drink wine or water, or tea or coffee, with my dinner; I ought to decide that myself.

The desire to eat, like the desire to breathe, is primitive. It is a primitive instinct. You do not have to tell a baby that he wants milk, and you do not have to tell anybody that he wants food. They may eat too much; the desire being there often leads them to

eat too much, just the same as they are often intemperate in a thousand things; but the desire in the individual leaves it to him to know what he wants and how much he wants; and the whole story of life is for man to control himself; take care of his own appetite, and his own desires, and make himself a self-governing man (applause.) We are strong and great, and the nation is strong and great, just in proportion as its people are free and independent, and self-governing people (applause).

There is a lot of things in this world that are good, but there is nothing in this world that is so good as liberty (applause.) Liberty is a mighty good thing to have. Even if you are never are going to use it, you like to have it there in case you want to use it; and you are pretty sure to want to use it if you haven't got it. The fact that I am of age—that the law makes me a freeman—is enough of itself to say that I may eat what I please; I may drink what I please; I may wear what I please; I may go and come as I please, and it is nobody's business, until I reach the point in my conduct that directly interferes with them.

It is not for me to prove the right to drink beer, if I want to drink it. It is for the prohibitionist, who denies that right, to tell me why I cannot do it. Of course, I know that the prohibitionists do not propose to forbid your buying, they only propose to forbid people selling (applause and laughter.) I understand that one of the most prominent leaders of prohibition in the town says he keeps it in his house and uses it, but he wants to shut up the saloons. That is a kind and charitable spirit, to shut up the saloons because the poor man cannot afford it. Prohibition never did mean anything except prohibition for the poor man.

Of course, the rich man can get it, and get pretty much everything he wants, if he has got the price, but with the poor man it is different. There is a lot of poor men who cannot afford to buy a gross of champagne at once, or a barrel of whiskey; they might not have time to drink it if they had it (applause and laughter;) but they could buy a schooner of beer, just one. (Laughter and applause.)

Prohibition would not interfere with the rich; it was never meant to interfere with them. I do not suppose any man who has got the price will be in any great danger. Of course, the poor man would be shut off now and then; but why not? What business is there for a poor man to drink; it is his business to work. Anyhow, he is not able to control his own appetite, and he needs his money; he has no right to fool it away. He might buy a "Merry Widow" hat for his wife, or any old thing. He has no business to fool it away on booze. It is a poor man's prohibition; it is meant to reach them.

But what do these people say? For the whole burden of this argument is on them. It is not for me to demonstrate my right to breathe; I cannot live unless I breathe. I just do it. If I had to prove it I would die before I got it proved (laughter.)

I have not got time to demonstrate my right to eat and drink and choose the things I want to eat and drink. But here comes a band of people who say: Now, you can drink water; you cannot drink beer. You can drink tea and coffee; you cannot drink whiskey. You can drink chocolate, but you cannot drink wine. You can drink sweet cider, but you cannot drink "hard" cider (laughter and applause.) Wonderfully wise people these are. Cider is a criminal drink according to how old it is. It is a crime to drink it on Saturday, but it is all right on Friday. And so with everything else—at least with wine. If it is intoxicating or exhilarating—and most everything is, more or less—you cannot drink it.

What reason do they give for telling me that I must go to jail if I drink it, or buy it, or sell it. Now it is quite a proposition to tell me what I can eat or drink. I insist that if a man is going to make it a criminal act to drink something, he ought to give mighty strong reasons for it. Before you are going to pass a law to send any of your neighbors to jail for any particular kind of conduct, you have got to have a very clear

reason that it is criminal conduct, and it ought to take considerable more than a majority thinking one way to make that conduct criminal.

Now, I have not heard a real, downright prohibition speech for well, it must be thirty years; I think I have been of age for more than that, and I have not heard one since, but I have read some of them, and I undertake to say that they are telling just the same reasons today that they were thirty-five years ago when my father used to take me by the hand and drag me to hear them, and then I signed the pledge afterwards—that was the best way to get out.

The reasons are the same. What are they? Let's examine these reasons and see whether they are good: Why, whiskey causes all the crime of the world, or at least a very large part of the crime of the world. Whiskey causes all the poverty of the world; it causes death; it causes disease; it causes widows and orphans, therefore we will prohibit it. Now, I think that is about the indictment. If they have got any new ones they are later than my day; but these are enough.

Now you have heard prohibition speeches. You know it is easy to make them; I could make them, if I believed in them, or if I didn't believe. You don't need very much. All you have to do is to say "whiskey"—or, no, say "rum;" that sounds more horrible, and when one gets so one can pronounce the word "rum" in a proper way, they have got a long start. And then, after you have got that, you want to be able to say: "What are you going to do with this poor fellow who is bound to fill a drunkard's grave?" And if you need anything more you can work in "shoes for little Johnny." There you are. (Laughter and applause.)

You do not need any figures or any facts; you only need feeling—sentiment. That is what moves people.

Now, I have been engaged in a profession for a number of years (I would not dare say this if I were in Chicago, but I don't care anything about the lawyers here), and we fellows who try cases before jurors know that the last thing that a juror is ever interested in is a fact; and it is the last thing we are ever interested in. What we are after is a situation that will appeal to the feelings; the prejudices, the emotions of man; for you can reach men a good deal easier through their feelings and prejudices and emotions than you can through your reason, for they have got more of them.

Now, you cannot possibly get up any emotion on "booze;" I would not know how to do it; I cannot do it; I am not going to try. Whatever you say on the subject, must appeal to an audience upon the line of the reason of the question.

But let us examine this indictment, and see whether it is true. The prohibitionists tell us a good many things that are not true. They do not need to get figures. There are only nine figures anyway, and a cipher, and then they put them together as they see fit. (Applause.)

Is it true that whisky is responsible for the crime of the world? Or all of it, or for a large part of it? Let's see. You cannot prove it by figuring. There are too many things that influence human conduct to enable one to tell what has caused any particular crime.

Did you ever know of any rich people who drink? It cannot be that any rich people drink, because, if they did, they would begin committing crime. Now, first and last, all the jails and penitentiaries are filled with the poor; nobody else goes to jail but poor people. A man would not go to jail if he could afford any other place. (Laughter and applause.)

So there is a lot of people who drink whisky who do not commit crime. The prohibitionists think that nobody but the poor drink; but they are mistaken. Rich people honestly do drink. I have seen them. Of course, you may go to an ordinary place where you can buy a schooner for a nickel, and you don't find so many rich people; but

go to one of the hotels; go up here to the Hollenden, and in Chicago to the Annex, or go down to Pittsburg where the good people live. I have been in bar-rooms there often, and I have seen poor people there, but they were always cleaning the spittoons. (Applause and laughter.) These people were not drinking. The fellows that were drinking were lawyers, and bankers, and doctors, and preachers, and things like that. They were not the poor.

Now, I think I can settle this question in just about a minute. I don't know how many of you people ever went to jail. I have been there, more or less, different times. Why, if you do, you will find that wherever it is, there is just one class of people in jail, and that is the poor. Once in a long while a rich man gets to jail; but it is so rare as to be the exception which proves the rule; and when a rich man goes to jail he does not go there for drinking; he goes there because he is not rich enough. (Laughter.)

If whisky produced crime I wonder if a good many criminals would not ride up to jail in an automobile. They don't.

The people who make those statements know nothing whatever about the subject. They are so crazy on the subject of what they call "rum," that they make any statement that comes into their heads.

You may take any book on criminology; any author who has given any honest attention to the subject, and you can find no such statement as that. True, there are some offenses here and there which are caused by liquor; but when it comes to the serious crimes of the world, they are so few that they scarcely are mentioned in the statistics. The poor go to jail. First and last, they go there because of their poverty.

Long ago a great historian and philosopher, Mr. Buckle, wrote the History of the Civilization of Europe, brought long rows of figures to show that the number of people in our jails and penitentiaries, rose and fell, year after year, just according to the price of grain. When bread was dear, people went to jail; when food was cheap, they left the jail. And it is a dead sure thing that when the price of coal goes up, and when the price of food goes up, it means that some unfortunate men are driven to jail; and when the price of oil goes up it means that some sewing girls, somewhere in the world, are driven out on the street to make a living in some other way. (Applause.)

Men are dependent upon the great laws of nature; and their place in life, and their conduct in life, are as much ruled by those laws as are the plants and the animals.

I can give you many facts—broad, large facts—which show these statements. Do you know more people go to jail in the winter than in the summer? Did you ever hear the prohibitionists tell you that? They would not know what it meant if they knew it was true. There are more people go to jail in winter than in summer. That is not because men are wickeder in winter than in summer, for they are not. The climate does not produce that effect upon men. There are more people have religion in winter than in summer. Do you suppose there is any connection between these facts? Clearly there is.

You people do not know much about it here, but if you came down into one of our wards in Chicago where the common people live, down amongst the bums—and Democrats—(laughter), get down into Hinkey Dink's ward, get down there on a cold January night, and clear out a store building, and put in a stove and fill it up, and get it red hot, and get an evangelist in there, and you cannot get the people out; and they will stay there all winter; and then, when springtime comes, they will get over their religion and go on about their business. These fellows are what we call "winter Christians." They don't get religion, they just get warm. (Laughter and applause.)

And it is just the same way with the jails. Why, in this glorious civilization of ours, where we have such magnificent homes for the few, and such poor ones for the many; where we have champagne for the few and beer for the many; where we have

a few rich and many poor; in this system of ours, the great mass of men are living right along the line of want.

How many working people—ordinary working people—have got gold fillings in their teeth? Not that kind of filling—hardly any sort. How many of them can afford to hire the best surgeon and the best physician? If a rich man gets rheumatism, the doctor prescribes that he go down to Hot Springs, or “Taggartsville,” in Indiana, or some such place as that. If any of you are working people, and you get a case of rheumatism, you never hear a doctor make such a prescription for you. He would say: “You stay and keep on working, and keep as warm as you can;” and you can keep warmer working than you can any other way. (Laughter and applause.)

As I said, in this civilization of ours, the great mass of people are always living along the line of want; of sickness, disease, death. Hard luck places them in want. They are living on a narrow line; for it is a very shadowy line that separates lawful conduct from criminal conduct.

If they lose their jobs, it means want; and so, in the winter when coal is dear, when food is high, and wages are low, and work is scarce, then the jails fill up; they fill up in every land on earth; and in accordance to these great natural laws, there are more people going to jail in hard times than in good times.

When work is plenty and wages are comparatively high, workingmen do not go to jail; but let the mills close, and food be scarce, and the jails fill up. There is nowhere else to go; and so the jails of the world fill up in winter, and, in the summer time, men go off into the green fields and under the blue sky, and they go to work. Let food get scarce and then you hear grumbling. It comes, first, from the poor, and, before they starve, they break over the vague, shadowy line between criminal conduct and rightful conduct, and they land in jail. Our jails and our penitentiaries are peopled with poor, and for the crime, first and last, of poverty. I will tell you what will cure the criminal, and that is to feed him, make it desirable for him to get his living by what we might term an honest occupation, instead of a dishonest one.

Can you find out the immediate cause, or the remote cause, or the real cause that sends men to jail? You can take it from me that it is hard to tell what produces criminals; but the prohibitionist will tell you the cause is “rum,” and he says he has got statistics to prove it.

Men are products of environment; victims of every idle wind that blows; and when a prohibitionist comes to give the reason, why men are in jail and places the responsibility upon this or that, it simply shows his ignorance, and nothing else. My answer for the cause of crime would be, first and last, poverty. It is the weak, the poor, and the malformed; those who are not able to compete in the fierce struggle for existence; it is these that fall by the wayside, and are caught up in the great whirlpool of life, and find themselves in jails and penitentiaries, and no one can say whether it was “rum” or not, that was the cause.

Poverty is the father and mother of crime; but the prohibitionists say that whiskey is the cause of crime, and whiskey is the cause of poverty, and so you are just where you started. Let us see. Did you ever know rich people to drink? But that cannot be, for if they drank they would get poor, according to the prohibitionist’s logic. The prohibitionist insists that whiskey is the cause of poverty, and proves it to his own satisfaction; and yet you find that there are rich people who drink whiskey. Therefore, if a man drinks whiskey and is poor, that is the cause of poverty; and if he is rich, and drinks whiskey, that is the cause of his riches. They are a wonderful lot—these prohibitionists—and a very studious crowd.

Does whiskey cause poverty? According to the prohibitionist it does; but if you think rich people don’t drink whiskey you have another guess coming. (Laughter.)

Do you think the Morgans, Carnegies, Harry Thaws and others of the rich people who have lots of money don't drink? Why don't some of these gentlemen get poor? It is champagne the other fellow drinks; and that champagne you pay for. Now, I would like to see the time when the poor man could afford to drink all the champagne that he made; not because I think he needs it, but I would like to see him so well off that he could afford to; and I would like to see the time when the fellow who made the other things the rich have, could use them if he wanted to. (Applause.)

Now, as a matter of fact, whiskey, like food and clothing, is produced by the poor; but the best of them are consumed by the rich. The rich get the best of everything. They get the best doctors, the best preachers and the best lawyers, and the poor man gets what is left. Now they are trying to take that away. There are thousands and thousands of people in this world, who have drank for many years, and still have not got poor, and still are able to own automobiles.

Now, what has whiskey to do with poverty? Let us be honest about this question. I don't suppose anybody needs liquor at all. I don't think it helps anyone's system. I don't think a workingman needs it. You don't need it any more than you need coffee. All that you can say of it is, that it tastes good going down. You might live longer without it. Just tastes good going down. Half a dozen men meet together in a saloon and talk, and have a drink, and half a dozen women get together in a church sewing society and talk about their neighbors, and take a cup of tea. (Laughter.) It just tastes good going down in both cases. Whiskey does the system of a man no good, and the tea makes the women nervous, and they are nervous enough anyway. (Laughter.)

But the prohibitionist says that a man spends his money for whiskey, and that makes him poor. He wears clothes and spends his money for them; does that make him poor? Does living in a house make a man poor? For he has to spend money for it. Poverty may be a cause for men drinking whiskey, and many times it is, but not always. As a broad fact, whiskey has little to do with poverty. (Applause.)

Now, let us see if I can show it. I will admit, to start with, that a workingman does not need it for his health, and might actually live longer, and be stronger, probably, if he didn't get it in any quantity; but that is all I will admit. What do the working people do with their money? I have been in the homes of a great many working people, and I know something about how working people live. I have seen working people eat pie—what business has a workingman to eat pie? He don't need it; he only hurts his stomach by eating it—but I don't know as a workingman is in much danger of eating too much of it—I wish he could afford all the luxuries—but pie doesn't help the human system, and many say it hurts it; yet you eat it, although bread is much cheaper. Do you waste your money on it? If so you are fooling it away. You eat cake; what business have you to eat cake? You don't need it,—putting all that lard in your stomach keeps you from saving money. You have only one excuse—it tastes good going down. And meat—most of the working people in America eat meat. They don't need it. The Chinaman lives on rice; the Italian lives on macaroni; an Irishman lives on potatoes, and a little whiskey; the German lives on brown bread, and a Scotchman eats oats. Why should any workingman eat meat? (Laughter.) All these other people cannot afford it, and they are as strong and healthy, and they put in longer hours, and receive less money.

I will guarantee that if you go into the homes of any American workingman you will find that three-quarters of the money spent for food is thrown away,—that is so far as existence is concerned. Yes, he could deprive himself of all of this. Why, four hundred million dollars were spent last year for tea and coffee; most of it went down the throats of workingmen and their families. Four hundred million dollars poured down their throats last year,—was that a waste? The prohibitionist does not care

about that. He does not care what you do with your money, so long as you don't buy "rum" with it. You may buy tea and coffee, but you must not buy "rum," because it comes within the jurisdiction of the prohibitionist. You don't need any of these things, for three-fourths of all that is spent is money thrown away in pure luxuries—simply tastes good going down. You can live on shredded wheat and baled hay. (Laughter.) And the rest of it is spent trying to enjoy life,—trying to get something that tastes good,—nothing else in it.

You dress—why the working people fool away money on it; dress for themselves and dresses for the family. I have seen wives of working people with silk shirt-waists! What right have they to a silk shirt-waist or a "Merry Widow?" They are only ornaments, and not so very ornamental at that. And they buy feathers for their hats. Why, you don't need them. Silk shirt-waists and feathers make some poverty. If the workingman didn't buy shirt-waists and feathers he might possibly go to the moving pictures. All the American workingmen spend money on these things, and they are useless ornaments; and he can work as hard and live as long without them as with them. Most of the money spent for clothes for himself and family is pure luxury—not a particle different—waste of money for things that are not necessities.

We have better houses and better homes, more and better food, and more clothes than the people of Europe, and still the workingman is poor,—he is wasting his money on "rum," wasting it on food, wasting it on clothing, wasting it in a dozen ways. But you know that the only thing that any of us want is the luxuries of life. We do not care generally for the necessities. You can get a living at the poor farm; and a man can get clothes and board without working for them,—he can get them in jail, and get them regularly.

But every man is always reaching after luxuries,—that makes progress. The things we need we will get, and when we cannot get them we will die. We want clothes that looks fine; food that tastes good, and we want houses large and comfortable. If we are able to ride in street cars, we want a horse and buggy. If we have a horse and buggy, we want an automobile; and if we have an automobile, we would want an air-ship. It is the luxuries we are all after; and I, for one, don't want for a moment to get away from the luxuries. When you lose the desire for wasting money you begin to go the other way. If you ever lose the desire for luxury, you have started back towards the place from which you came.

Now, let us look at this from the workingman's standpoint. Do you waste money? Thank God, I wish you could waste more; you ought to be able to waste more. Let us see what the prohibitionist knows about the political economy. Do you think it wise, men, workingmen, to be economical? Why, I should like to teach them one lesson,—I would like to teach them extravagance rather than economy. I know perfectly well that if you teach the *individual* to live cheaper than his fellowmen, *he* can save some money; but if I could teach *all* the workingmen to live cheaper, do you know what would happen? Your wages would go down.

You know what it has cost, workingmen, to rise from the slavery of the past. You will find every step in this progress has cost the workingman labor. Every luxury he has received has been wrung from the strong and powerful. It has cost him much. But he has developed his intellect, and put power and privilege into his hands.

It has cost something to the countless millions of men who battled for these privileges before you were born. Do you want to give it up? Let me say to you, not for the sake of the waste. Vote as your conscience dictates; vote for the interests of yourselves; vote for the interests of liberty and humanity; but let me say to you, every privilege, every particle of power that you have, has cost too much to idly give it up. I would say to the workingman, keep all you have got and get more. (Applause.)

Suppose you can save 15 cents a day on your liquor bill, what is going to happen? I will tell you. These people are blockheads; they don't understand the A-B-C of political economy. They tell the workingman he can save 15 cents or 20 cents a day from his liquor bill; would he get it? Let me tell you a little about wages—and they are facts.

I know something about wages, excepting that I never worked for them—never had time to do that. Working people have a lot of bad habits, but the worst of them is work. (Laughter.) If you never get rid of that, you never get anywhere. Let me tell you a little about wages. How does anyone determine the amount of wages you are going to get? Are they fixed by what you earn? That has nothing to do with it. You may earn ten dollars a day and get one. You may be a lawyer, and earn a dollar a day, and get a hundred. His graft is better. (Laughter.) The amount of wages a man gets depends upon the kind of a graft he has got.

If there are a great many working people out of a job; if jobs are few and men are plenty, wages are low; if jobs are plenty and men are few, wages are high. It depends upon the law of supply and demand. But there is a point below which wages won't go. Wages cannot go below the cost of living. Workmen must have enough to sustain life and bring up families in this world, and wages must be such as to sustain life, so the children of the rich can have their work done in the next generation. You cannot crowd wages below that point. The standard of living in America does not mean the standard in China or India, and the statutes on the statute books of the United States, prohibiting China's cheap labor from coming to this country, were passed because it would lower the standard of living in America for the workingmen.

It is necessary to keep up the standard of living in order to keep up wages. Do you suppose that if you can demonstrate to the monopolists of this country that you can live on 20 cents a day less that you will get it? You will save that 20 cents, but you won't save it for yourselves, you will save it for someone else. Suppose you demonstrate to the world that American workingmen can eat less food, poorer food, drink less, and, further, live in poorer houses, wear poorer clothes, I don't think I need to tell you that wages will go down. (Applause.)

You know they will go down. Get more clothes, get more pleasures, get better things to eat, get moving pictures, get more "Merry Widow" hats; for in no other way can you work out the problem of wages. (Applause.) Don't drink, if you don't want to, but don't let anybody beguile you for one single moment with the thought that if you save 15 or 20 cents a day from your drink bill is saved for you rather than for your employer.

I don't care how much prohibitionists preach temperance, but I object to a handful of people, who never produced a single idea to help the workingmen, who never studied political economy,—I object to them taking a great movement like the labor movement of America,—freighted with high aspirations—I object to steering this movement down a blind alley after a prohibitionist's flag.

They had better give some other recipe than save your money; when they tell you how they love you—you had better ask them for their credentials. (Applause.) Their names are entirely foreign to any great new ideas; their names are entirely unknown to any movement ever enacted to better the conditions of the workingmen. They have not given study to it; have no interest in it. They are not interested in your *condition*. They are interested in your *conduct*. They don't care for your *bodies*, they are after your *souls*. You can do what you please, so far as they care, if you don't drink "rum." You cannot drink "rum"—and I will tell you the reason after a few moments, why they are interested in preventing the drinking of "rum."

Now, has that anything to do with labor? I have tried to study the problem of labor. I have read most of the political economists upon the the question, for the reason why the few are rich and the great mass so poor. I have read Adam Smith, John Stuart Mills, Henry George (applause), and I have read the works of most of the great political economists of the world. It is a work I have much at heart; I have thought, here and there, that I had some light upon this great problem of the ages, and I had come to believe that the reason that the great mass of people are poor is because a few men had taken the gold that nature had been millions of years in storing up in the bowels of the earth; a few men had taken the ore; a few men had taken the forests; a few men have the railroads; a few men have possession of the prairies and the hills and untilled fields, and the great mass of humanity are bound helpless because of the great monopolists who control all the wealth; and I had come to believe that you cannot make the poor man richer by telling the poor man to cut down his food supply, to save his money, while a few men hold the industries of the country in the hollow of their hands. (Applause.)

A few men can give employment or want to the great mass of their fellows. While the few men have all the stores which nature has made, and which the many have made, just so long will there be rich, and there will be poor; and I object to these new prophets who ignore all the teachings of the past, who pass by all the political economy ever written,—I object to them turning from the problems of today, and telling you that the workingmen must just quit drinking “rum,” and it will make them rich. If you want to follow them, follow them. You will follow them back, back over the long path that you have traveled

Suppose a philanthropist should come here tomorrow and put up a hotel,—a great big hotel—and board every workingman for a dollar a week, what do you suppose would happen? Why, the next week some watch manufacturer would come along and build a shop and hire you for a dollar a week. Doesn't everybody know it, except the prohibitionists, that the last thing in the world should be to reduce the standard of living of the workingmen? Buy an automobile, pay for it on installment plan, do something like that or buy an air-ship. Don't save it, because when you do, you won't get it.

But they say whiskey causes death and fills drunkard's graves. I want to talk about this. I don't believe anybody needs whiskey; as I said, “it just tastes good.” I suppose a man would live somewhat longer if he didn't touch it. If he dies at 70 years, he might have lived six months or a year longer, if he never had anything to do with it. As to the other means of prolonging life, the prohibitionists don't care a cent about them—whiskey is the only thing to them that causes death.

Why, all the people who die, don't die of jim-jams—some of the people do die of lard on the liver, for instance. They eat too much. Not many workingmen eat too much—they only die on account of whiskey—(laughter), but I think nine out of every ten of the well-to-do have had their death hastened because they ate too much. Their heart is bad, their liver bad, their kidneys bad, their stomach bad; they are dyspeptics and they would live longer if they ate more moderately.

Now, all of us are gluttons—all of us if we can afford it,—and it hurts our health. I was reading the other day of a great French physician who made the statement that a man should live to be 150 years old, if he understood the laws of life; and among the things which he mentions as causing death, he puts down liquor; but it is not the first in order. One of the first things he mentions is meat. Whenever a man dies under a hundred, you may be sure he has been cut off in his youth. He has either drank too much or he has not drunk enough, or has worked too hard or has not worked enough.

Do the prohibitionists care how long you live? No, they don't. I want to prove that the prohibitionists don't care a cent for the life of the workingman, or of any other man. They don't care whether he lives 25 years or 500 years, or 25 minutes. He merely insists that he shall not drink—it is not needed. If they cared for the workingmen I think I could tell them where they could do good if they wanted to increase the span of life. If they are sincere in the business of prolonging human life—you can scarce find a graveyard with a corpse that was not taken there from liquor, so they say—let them do something practical. Of all the men born in the world 1-6 go through the doorway of death—one out of six die of tuberculosis between the age of 20 and 30 years. What do they care about that? No, that is outside of their jurisdiction,—their jurisdiction is "rum," and if you could get one-tenth of the enthusiasm and money which is expended in fighting "rum" to battle against tuberculosis, you could, with an insignificant cost, rid the world of tuberculosis, the great white plague, inside of 50 years. No, he is not interested on account of life, but something else. Why put tuberculosis victims in tenement houses, where the disease claims father, and mother, daughter and son? They die for want of air,—for want of fresh air and lack of good food, because of greedy men—and when they turn to the philanthropist and tell them these stories and urge the passage of laws to make some sunlight and air in their homes and better wages, they say, "Oh, no, leave them alone, but let us cut out 'rum.'"

Let me take something simpler than that. I want to do this job so thoroughly that you won't have to do it over. (Applause.) These are such good gentlemen—they don't care for your lives, they care no more for the lives of men than flies. They are interested in your souls.

Let us see what about the lives that these gentlemen think liquor cuts off. Workingmen live only 60 per cent as long as a man who doesn't work, but other things besides drink produces death. For my part I had rather die from drinking too much than from working too much. Do they care for the lives of the workingmen? A doctor lives five to ten years longer than the workingman. To condemn a man to labor is to condemn him to death. Lawyers have an advantage over the doctors of from 5 to 10 years. He does not have to stay up nights—that is, he doesn't *have to*. (Laughter.) But a banker lives longer than a lawyer,—he does not have to do anything more than cut off coupons, and he has 5 years the advantage; but the preacher beats them all. The preacher is the longest lived of all professional men. There isn't any wear and tear at all on a preacher, not a bit. The preacher is a first-class risk for insurance companies, and is the only one having free fire insurance. (Laughter.)

Now, do any of these gentlemen care that the workingman has only 60 per cent. of life? Do they do anything to make it longer? Nothing, except to tell him he must not drink.

But let us make it plainer than that. Take the occupation of a switchman. Of course, a switchman's job is generally steady, and his work is very hazardous—he is liable to have his body scattered over the yard when he dies,—but if he is lucky he will live about eight years, and have his wife and children go to the poorhouse after he is dead. Does this appeal to the prohibitionist? No, they don't care anything about widows unless they are caused by "rum," and they don't care how many orphans there are in the world unless their fathers died of "rum." If you are a switchman you will probably live eight years, and if you get killed, even a prohibitionist won't weep over your grave.

If a switchman goes down into the yard to work some day, and there is a freight car standing on the track ready to be coupled, and he attempts to couple another car or engine to the standing car, and gets his head caught between the iron bumpers and gets killed, and leaves a wife and children, does that appeal to a prohibitionist? No, it

is nothing to him,—it was not caused by “rum.” But suppose he had worked all night and stopped in to get a drink of whiskey to warm his body up, and in going back he stubbed his toe on the track, fell down and got run over, then the prohibitionist would rave and weep, and take little Johnnie up in his arms and lament over the fact that he had been made an orphan by “rum.” But for the widows and orphans made by railroad accidents, he doesn’t care; it doesn’t interest him,—there are too many; but a widow and orphans caused by “rum” is different.

These facts are enough to violate all the principles for which men ever fought. Why, you can make it stronger than this. In the great cities most of the poor live in crowded tenement houses, and are in need of good air, sunshine and food, and one-half of the children of the poor die before they are five years old—one-half of the workingmen’s children die before they are five years old. They don’t die because they have had too much “rum,” but because they didn’t have enough milk and food, enough sunshine, enough air and enough earth. Do the prohibitionists care? Have they ever done anything to prevent this condition? Why, you can kill the other half, and they wouldn’t care a continental, unless they die from “booze.” I could make the indictment so long that it would take a long time to read it. In the East and South, there are tens of thousands of little children who are prisoners in factory and mill. Their flesh is coined into money. Do the prohibitionists who carried South Carolina, Georgia and Mississippi ever stop to drop one tear over the countless children who must thus work, and who have had no chance to get an education, because men work up their tender flesh into gold? Does that appeal to them? No, that is not their business—their jurisdiction is “rum.”

You have had labor bills before the Ohio Legislature, and you have sent members of trades unions there,—you sent them there at the last session,—to try to make a factory law to protect children, and they pleaded for the passage of the bill; what did the prohibitionist do to help it? Nothing. They said, don’t listen to those men, but give us something to prevent the drinking of “rum,” and your bill was side-tracked through them, and finally went into the waste basket,—for the sake of limiting the liberties of men. Do you know, that after Congress passed a law to compel railroad companies of this State to put safety couplers on their cars, that it took 20 years to ever get a semblance of enforcing the law? While prohibitionist preachers were talking about “rum” thousands of switchmen were killed, and countless thousands of orphans were made,—whilst these gentlemen were trying to control your personal habits. Did they care? Were you ever met by a committee of prohibitionists who were willing to help you get adopted a measure advocated by the trades unions? While you were working for this or that measure, these gentlemen would say, “That you should leave those things as they are, and let us get rid of ‘rum,’ and then we will help you;” and the next year, if you go back to try to obtain the passage of your bill, they would say, “Let us get rid of tobacco,” and when they got rid of that they would say: “There is Sunday baseball, that’s a moral question, let us get rid of that,”—and so it would go on to the crack of doom. Tell us when these gentlemen ever cared for life or limb. Why do they care for “rum,” if it is not to save life? Simply because it is the old spirit of puritanism that still exists, which we thought was dead in this world. It is not because they hate death—it’s because they hate fun. With them fun is always associated with the devil. They don’t believe in pleasure, and, therefore, want to get rid of it. I will guarantee if they got rid of “rum” that they would want to get rid of Sunday baseball. They don’t believe in it. They wouldn’t even let you buy an automobile if you could afford it. Not many of them believe in the theater for any day in the week. They don’t believe in the theater, they don’t believe in dancing, and don’t believe in playing cards. Could you have any pleasures under the old New England “blue laws?” If they could,

they would put us under those blue laws and customs,—and I knew something about them when I was a boy. Sunday began on Saturday night, and held clear through until Monday morning; there was nothing to do except to go to the graveyard, and when you got there you wished you could stay there. (Laughter.) They are against pleasure, and don't believe in it. They would interfere with happiness and enjoyment, and they would regulate your ways of life because they are more interested in your souls than in your bodies. Sunday would be a day of weariness, and you would not be able to work or play; the preacher would be the only one who would work on Sunday, and it must be work to preach one of those sermons.

Now, if you want this kind of a system, start out with the whiskey business; but it wouldn't rest there,—I know perfectly well what a busy lot these people are. Suppose they succeeded in this matter, they would take an inventory and see what else they could land on. (Applause.) It don't hurt me if they cut out the whiskey, but I would rather stop them, right here and right now, before they get more power. You can never trust this spirit,—never trust prohibitionists or fanatical clergymen who hold the torches of hell before your eyes. It is the spirit of fanaticism that I don't like. Preachers are alright in their way; let them talk moral conduct, if they please—you don't have to hear them unless you want to.

Just put it to yourselves. Suppose you had to pick 20 men to govern this town, and would give them the right to pass any law they saw fit, would you pick out a preacher? Would you pick out a prohibitionist? Not on your life. You would pick out the broadest-minded people you could find. You would pick out people who had fallen down and gotten up again; you would pick out people who were broad and tolerant, and if you didn't your lives wouldn't be safe.

Now, I have practiced law a good many years, and have helped to pick out a good many juries. Anybody can try a case, but you must have a good jury. If I had to defend a criminal case I would never let a prohibitionist on the jury, not if I could help it. A lawyer who would let one of them on a jury, if he could avoid it, would be guilty of malpractice. (Laughter.) You want broad, tolerant men,—men who have done wrong themselves, with a feeling for the weakness of fellowmen,—men with kindness and charity in their hearts. This old world could not get along on any other theory. You have got to give it a pretty good swing, or it cannot last.

The trouble with these fellows is, they don't like pleasure. Of course, they have an advantage, I will admit, because they feel sure if they wear a long face they will be happy in "Kingdom come." I don't know anything about it, though, and I am afraid it would be just my luck, if I went through life with a long face and didn't have any fun,—it would be just my luck to find that there wasn't any next world,—and I would miss it here and miss it there. (Applause.)

It is not wise to take too many chances. There is but a short space between the cradle and the grave—so much of sorrow, so much trouble and so many tears, that you had better keep all the pleasures you have got and get more—there are none too many pleasures left. Any joy in the world conduces to life; conduces to real happiness. There will be sighs enough and tears enough at the last.

Now, just a word more; if you want to try this plan, then try it. But I would say, keep all your liberties. Liberty makes mistakes, beyond doubt,—you cannot regulate society so it won't make mistakes,—but all progress has been made through liberty. You can regulate men from the face of the earth, by regulating joy and sunshine from it, but is that the path of progress? If you will look back to the origin of the human race, away back to the dim and distant past, back to the time man first arose, you will find every footstep marked with a struggle for liberty, with toil, with suffering and travail for the human race, and that the pathway has been onward and upward to the place it occupies today.