

The Nation.

May 4, 1918

King Alcohol Keeps Cool

LESS than six months have elapsed since Congress submitted the Federal prohibition amendment to the States. Within that time, a fourth of the whole number whose consent is necessary to its adoption have ratified it. It is evident that we are in the midst of a great battle, perhaps the decisive battle, over the question. Newspapers and magazines recognize the critical nature of the situation by giving liberal space to news and arguments about prohibition. The Governor of the greatest State in the Union makes it a leading issue of the legislative session. Everywhere people are discussing the chances of success for the offensive thus undertaken against liquor. But how is it within the fortifications assailed? Unstrung nerves, blanched cheeks, trembling voices, furtive looks, panic—are not these what one who could make his way inside would expect to find?

Judge of the surprise of the visitor when he discovers no such condition. King Alcohol seems not apprehensive of danger. Yet to him have just been delivered the "Year-Book of the United States Brewers' Association" for 1917 and the "Anti-Prohibition Manual" for 1918. Would not older editions be pleasanter? But open the "Manual":

WASHINGTON A DISTILLER

George Washington, concerning whom Lincoln spoke with so much eloquence, was the owner of a distillery. In his will, at Mt. Vernon, July 9, 1799, he bequeathed to his wife, "All my household and kitchen furniture of every sort and kind with the LIQUOR and groceries which may be on hand." To Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Lewis he gave his "mill, DISTILLERY, and all other houses and improvements on the premises."

Anything here to trouble a tranquil mind? Turn the pages:

GALLIVAN SAID SOMETHING

Embedded in that mighty mountain of words, the *Congressional Record*, is a true epigram. It is found on page 5103 and is accredited to Mr. Gallivan, of Boston, who said: "Mr. Speaker, rum has more enemies in public and more friends in private than any other substance the world has ever known."

OldMagazineArticles.com

Drop the "Manual" and take up the "Year-Book." Opening it at random, you come upon this passage:

Physicians have always found alcohol a valuable, aye, an indispensable, remedy. There is hardly a human organism which is not favorably influenced; mainly the aged, feeble, fat, and convalescent feel its benefactions.

Is there anything in these words to alarm King Alcohol?

But surely the monarch's friends are not blind to what is going on, nor is it kindness to conceal from him the present untoward developments. Well, the "Year-Book" and the "Manual" do not ignore losses, only the bulk of their matter might have been presented just as well any time these hundred years. It is as if one looked out from his ivory tower at the advancing enemy, and then moved his chair away from the window and gave himself up to contemplation of more agreeable things. All the familiar arguments but one are here: the economic argument, the political argument, the physiological argument, the criminological argument, the argument from history. Only the argument from the Bible is wanting. One seeks in vain for the time-honored reference to Paul's advice to Timothy.

Still, there is much left. Perhaps nothing in either of the arsenals of logic and persuasion before us is more impressive in its way than "The History of Alcohol: Nations

Drank It and Became Great—Still Hold Their Supremacy." It begins:

(1.) In the northern hemisphere alcohol was discovered and used as a beverage for ages, while its use was wholly unknown in the southern hemisphere. Civilization rose only in the northern hemisphere and not in the southern.

(2.) Those parts of the northern hemisphere first attained civilization where alcohol was first used. In those parts of the northern hemisphere where alcohol was for ages unknown, civilization was likewise unknown.

(3.) In the Book of Genesis mankind is described as engulfed in wickedness before the discovery of alcohol. It improves after Noah "began to be an husbandman and planted a vineyard."

(4.) The intellectual superiority of the wine-drinking Greeks. . . .

(5.) . . . The Romans loved and drank wine.

(6.) From the earliest times to the Roman conquest northern Gaul and the valley of the Rhine was "dry" and uncivilized. From the Roman conquest to the fifth century A. D. it had alcoholic temptation and civilization.

It is easy enough to understand how King Alcohol, with such flattering literature as this around him, should have no fear of the future. But what is the explanation of the not altogether unsuccessful "drive" against him? Our theory is that people reason that there must be something wrong with an institution for which there is so much to be said.