

License or Prohibition

by George Albert Leddy

**THERE'S NOTHING SO BAD,
BUT IT MIGHT BE WORSE.
DON'T DECIDE IN A HURRY,
THINK WELL OF IT FIRST.**

The Politicians gathered, 'twas nearing election time;
The subject for discussion—was a "Prohibition Town."
The Speaker said the License, which some thought would be so fine,
Had "proven worthless;" perhaps, this year they'd vote to turn it down.

Perhaps someone who'd voted "YES," each year throughout the past;
Had sadly learned a lesson, each and everyone should know;
Through some loving Son or Brother, who now treads the downward path;
Would waken to their folly, and their vote would be a "NO."

The Speaker grasped the bottle, held it high, and loudly cried:
"Behold, the hideous reptile, with its fiery poisonous fangs;
He's ruler of the chasm which is yawning, deep and wide;
And waiting for the victim, who now, o'er the high cliff hangs!

"We must unite, and fight him; fight him to the bitter end;
We must unite an army, lay a snare, and catch the foe;
The welfare of Our Country, on our victory, now depends;
Our war munition is our vote—our vote must be a NO!"

He smashed the bottle crying, "Start the war, and set us free!"
When lo—a fiery Dragon from the bottle did appear.
He jumped around, and goaded, like a Hell-fiend in its glee;
And roared: "It is defiance, gentleman, that brings me here!

"For I defy you, boldly, do your worst—I'll still exist;
For I have had experience, many, many years—'tis true.
I'll live through Prohibition, when the License you've dismissed;
The better that you treat me, well—the best 'twill be for you.

“Just take me to your Hotel, where they have a decent bar;
And place me where the Public, who desire, may stroll in;
And I will sit there calmly; come they near, or stay they far;
I will not use my power—to influence temperate men.

“I will not bid a welcome, to the young, or to the weak;
I’ll turn them from my portals, when they seek to enter here.
I cannot do the cursid work, I’m held down so to speak;
The License Law will hold me, so there’s nothing much to fear.

“But when you kill the License, which protects you from my sting;
And call Old Prohibition in, to act as outer-guard;
It is then, I’m free to ramble; ‘tis then, I’m in full-swing;
‘Tis then I strike the blow, and the blow I strike is hard.

“‘Tis then you set me free, like a Lion from the cage;
Like a Panther, like a Snake, like a Devil—fierce am I;
Then I capture weaker Men, and I curse them in my rage;
And I hold them in my clutches, like a Demon, till they die!

“They will stumble through the alley, to the backdoor of some den:
I’m on every other street, under Prohibition’s care.
And I swear to do my damnedest, to lead men into sin;
When there’s no License Law, to disturb my precious lair.

“I’ll grasp, the young and simple; grasp, the old and weak of mind;
Grasp the Husband, and the Brother, and I’ll hold them ‘gainst their will.
There is something ‘bout my Dens, makes them linger for a while;
At last, they learn to hate it—but they linger, linger still.

“I’ll catch him, and I’ll drag him, to some place I hold command;
I’ll give him, good and plenty, till I craze the weakened brain;
I’ll take a sharp-edged dagger, and I’ll place it in his hand;
Then bring him to his senses—just to gaze on one he’s slain!

“And then the cry of, ‘Murder!’ will go ringing through the air.
The Policemen then will enter; take the Murderer to the Law.
He then receives the verdict: ‘Sentenced to the Electric-Chair.’
Ah, then is Prohibition right—or does it hold a flaw?”

“My last words!” roared the Dragon, in a voice of snarling hate:

“Think well before you mingle, let well enough alone;

Don’t vote for Prohibition, and regret when it’s too late.

Just leave it to the wise-men, whom experience has shown:

The License Law is safer, for it holds me in my place;

So close, I cannot do much harm—to that, I must confess.”

A flash, a roar, a rumble heard;

and then a vacant place.

The Dragon vanished in a smoke;

the Speaker roared, “Vote YES!”
