

1893

## A history of prohibition in Maine

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*Mr. Holman*

A HISTORY  
—OF—  
Prohibition 

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in Maine

BY  
**Hon. NEAL DOW**



## HISTORICAL SKETCH OF HON. NEAL DOW.

BY J. N. STEARNS.

HON. NEAL DOW was born in the city of Portland, Maine, on the 20th of March, 1804. His parents were of the Society of Friends. His first identification with the temperance movement was in connection with the Maine Temperance Union, an organization composed of those who withdrew from a society which had, by the form of its pledge, compromised with wine-drinkers. The Union appeared before the State Legislature in 1837, demanding the abrogation of all license laws, and the substitution of prohibition of the sale of all alcoholic beverages. His first public appearance as an advocate of the prohibitory policy was in 1839, when he appeared before the Board of Aldermen in his own city, and induced them to refer the question of "license" or "no-license" to a vote of the citizens. No-license was defeated by a majority of 35 out of a vote of 1,163. In 1842 he again succeeded in having the question submitted to the people, and it was carried by a majority of 440. He turned his attention to the State in 1843, printing and circulating petitions to the Legislature at his own expense, praying for a stringent law, and that "the traffic in intoxicating liquors might be held and adjudged an infamous crime." In February, 1844, he went before the Legislative Committee, which reported a bill favorably. It passed the House, but was defeated in the Senate. Meetings were held all over the State the next two years. Mr. Dow was speaking in school districts, and scattered a literature profusely everywhere over the State. In 1846 he secured the passage of a prohibitory law by a vote of 81 to 42 in the House, and 23 to 5 in the Senate. The penalties were insufficient, and the next year another bill was passed, but was vetoed by the Governor. In 1850 he presented a bill of his own drafting, and secured its passage in the House, but it was lost in the Senate by a tie vote. In 1851 he was elected mayor of the city of Portland, and for the sixth time appeared before the Legislature with a bill of his own, which passed the House 86 to 40, and the Senate 18 to 10. Mayor Neal Dow issued a proclamation that he should promptly enforce the law, giving venders sixty days to ship their liquor out of the city. He seized two thousand dollars worth of liquor and had it openly destroyed. Mr. Dow was re-elected, and a mob gathered to resist the execution of the law, but he was equal to the emergency, and the mob was repelled and dispersed. In 1853 he attended the World's Temperance Convention, held in the city of New York, and was made President of the Convention. The "Maine Law" was repealed in 1856, but Mr. Dow rallied the people, and it was re-enacted in 1857 with increased restrictions and penalties. In 1861 he recruited the Thirteenth regiment of Maine volunteers, and a battery of artillery, and entered the army. President Lincoln appointed him brigadier-general in 1862, and he was twice wounded in battle. He was Vice-President of the National Temperance Conventions held in Saratoga in 1865 and in Cleveland in 1868, representing the National Division Sons of Temperance on both occasions. He visited England three times, and delivered over five hundred addresses under the auspices of the United Kingdom Alliance in every part of the kingdom. He was initiated into the National Division Sons of Temperance of North America at the session held in Richmond, Virginia, in 1852, and was elected Most Worthy Associate of that body. He was the candidate of the Prohibition party in 1880 for the Presidency of the United States, and received 10,366 votes.

He was a member of the National Temperance Convention, held at Saratoga Springs in 1865, which organized the National Temperance Society and Publication House, and has been Vice-President of the Society from its commencement. He was tendered a "reception" by the Society on his return from England in 1875, on which occasion William E. Dodge presided, and he has spoken several times at the anniversaries of the Society.





HON. NEAL DOW.

SELECTIONS FROM THE SAYINGS OF NEAL DOW.

No political party in Maine can live unless it accepts Prohibition as the settled policy of the State.

Maine was made a Prohibition State by sowing it knee-deep with Temperance literature.

There is the grog-shop ; shut it up. It is ten thousand times more injurious than all other things combined.

The heart and soul of the Temperance movement are the church members engaged in it. They are very few compared with the entire membership, but few as they are, without them the Temperance cause would collapse.

We Prohibitionists denounce the grog-shop as the open gate to the pit, and the legalization of it as a great sin against God and an immeasurable crime against the common weal.

The liquor traffic exists in this country to-day only by the sufferance of the membership of the Christian churches. They are masters of the situation so far as the abolition of the traffic is concerned. When they say "Go," and vote "Go," it will go.



[From "Temperance in all Nations."]

## A HISTORY OF PROHIBITION IN MAINE.

BY HON. NEAL DOW.

It has been assigned to me to write a History of the Maine Law within the compass of fifteen hundred or two thousand words. Such a narrow space is a necessity. It will be difficult, I fear, to give a clear and distinct idea of the rise, progress, and result of prohibition in Maine within so brief a limit.

The attempt at prohibition in Maine was preceded for ten years or more by active and persistent work among the people in every part of the State, educating public opinion as to the results of the drink habit and especially to show the intimate and inevitable result of the liquor traffic in generating and perpetuating intemperance everywhere and in impoverishing, degrading, and brutalizing the people. In this missionary work it was particularly desired to come into close contact with farmers, mechanics, and other working people who constitute the bone and muscle of society. These were met everywhere, in every little country meeting-house, in every little country town-house, in every little wayside school-house, and in the fine season on a large scale in many groves, to which the people came from many miles about. These workers were all volunteers except one, who was always a clergyman, in love with his work, devoted to it, and well fitted for it, devoting all his time to it. He and the volunteers were abundantly supplied with temperance tracts, selected with care for the work in hand, and scattered freely among the people everywhere. They were distributed among the children at school to be taken home, given to men and women met on the streets and highways, and to the people assembled at temperance meetings. This was a very efficient part of the work of educating the people as to the inevitable mischief of the drink and the horrors coming in a thousand ways from the liquor traffic.

At the same time the people were taught that this mischievous trade was the creature of law; that it was established and protected by law; that the law was supposed to represent public opinion; that an enlightened public opinion should



demand a change in the law; that the liquor traffic should no longer exist by the permission of law, but should be prohibited as absolutely inconsistent with the public welfare, as waging deadly war upon every public and private interest. The people were taught that this change in the law could only be effected by votes, as all other national and State policies are established or overthrown, as the case may be.

When it was thought that public opinion was prepared for the change of policy which was desired, we went to the Legislature with a prohibitory bill all prepared to meet our views. Maine was Democratic; the government was Democratic in all its branches. There were no people in the Union who consumed more strong liquors in proportion to numbers than those of Maine had done. There were many distilleries in the State; grog-shops were everywhere; there was no hamlet so small and retired that the drink-fiend did not find it and establish a drunkard factory there. We went to the Legislature with our bill, and were defeated two to one in the vote. We were active among our people, and when the next election came we put our will into the ballot-box, and cleared the State House out with ballots, not shovels.

We went to the next Legislature after an interval of a year, with our bill improved; it was passed through all its stages, and was enacted in one and the same day by a vote of eighteen to ten in the Senate and eighty-six to forty in the House, and took effect upon its approval by the Governor, who signed it on Monday, the second of June, 1851. It was the will of the people emphatically declared through the ballot-box, that accomplished that wonderful revolution in the policy of the State touching the liquor traffic. That bill outlawed liquors kept for sale and doomed them to seizure on sight, to confiscation and destruction. At the moment, liquor-shops, wholesale and retail, were everywhere through the State, having, many of them, large stocks on hand, and there had been no notice of the advent of such a disastrous law. These stocks of liquors, great and small, were all liable at any moment to be seized, confiscated, and destroyed. In consideration of this, the municipal authorities issued a public notice that liquor-dealers would be allowed a reasonable time in which to send their liquors away to other States where the sale was yet permitted. These men took advantage of that grace; and it was to us temperance workers a glorious thing to see long processions of truck-teams and drays of every shape and size loaded with liquors



of all sorts, flying as for life to steamboat landings and to railway stations, on their way to rum-loving Boston and New York.

The result of this wonderful revolution was immediate and plainly seen throughout the State. All decent men everywhere engaged in the liquor trade abandoned it at once. There were decent rum-sellers in those days—the traffic remained on a very small scale, and on the sly only among low and disreputable people. The diminution of the liquor trade was so sudden and so great that within six months the jails in the counties of Penobscot, Kennebec, Franklin, Oxford, and York were empty. The jail in the most populous county, Cumberland, had for years been badly overcrowded, but within six months it had only five inmates, three of whom were rum-sellers. The House of Correction for Cumberland County was entirely empty. The immediate decrease of the number of paupers in our work-houses was like that of occupants of our jails. The law was well enforced generally throughout the State. In Portland before the law there were many poor, ragged, barefooted children begging cold victuals from door to door. Almost every respectable family had regular customers in that line. Many other children as badly clad, in summer and winter were at the ship-yards, carpenters' shops, and pump and block makers' shops picking up chips. Even in winter barefooted children were seen at this work. Within six months after the enactment of the law all that disappeared from our streets, and not a fragment of it remains at this day.

From all our rural districts the liquor traffic disappeared entirely, so that now an entire generation has grown up there never having seen a grog-shop nor the effects of one. In our smaller towns and villages generally the same thing may be said, though in some of them the liquor traffic yet lingers on the sly and on a very small scale. In our larger towns and cities (some of them) liquor is yet sold without much concealment, though comparatively on a small scale. It is far within the fact to say that less than one-twentieth of the quantity of liquors formerly sold in the State is now smuggled in and sold in violation of law. The quantity of liquor now sold in Portland is not one-hundredth part so great as it was formerly—the city being twice larger now than it was when the law was enacted. Formerly, liquors equal to the entire valuation of the State were sold in every period of twenty years, as they are now sold in the Nation to the value of all its property in every



period of thirty-five years. Maine was formerly the poorest State in the Union; now it is one of the most prosperous. We save and have been saving, directly and indirectly, more than twenty million dollars annually, which but for prohibition would be spent and wasted in drink. The effect of all this may be seen to-day, everywhere over the State, in better houses, better farms and farm-buildings, in better school-houses, better churches (buildings, I mean), and far better public buildings for all purposes, and better ways of living. In short, the whole character of the State and people has been greatly changed for the better.

But why has not the Maine Law effected a radical cure of the whole evil? Why should any fraction of the liquor traffic yet remain in the State? Let us see in brief what has already been accomplished. Every distillery in the State has been swept away. We had seven of them, large ones, and two large breweries in Portland—all gone now. At the same time with the distilleries, we had every year many cargoes of West India rum discharged upon our wharves. We have not had even one puncheon imported for many years. We had many large wholesale liquor-shops in all parts of the State; not one of them remains to-day. The use of wines and liquors was universal at all public dinners and large gatherings of men and women. Now such a display is rarely if ever seen upon our tables. We had innumerable open, flaring retail grog-shops everywhere; now an open saloon nowhere. But why has not even the secret, sly grog-shop been suppressed?

The liquor traffic is carried on for the profit of it, not for the fun of it. A law to entirely suppress the trade must be so drawn as to take all the profit from it, and by stern terms of jail, to make it also uncomfortable to those who persist in it. The penalties of our law are not yet sufficient for that. It was thought wise not to make the penalties of the original Maine Law so high as to risk a reaction in public opinion. The great thing was to have the principle of prohibition recognized, accepted, and established by law, the necessary penalties would come afterwards. In 1884 prohibition was put into our Constitution by a majority of 47,075 votes, the affirmative being three times larger than the negative. This has established the fact that the Maine Law is approved by an overwhelming public opinion, so that sufficient penalties for the thorough enforcement of the law are sure to come in time. For the present, the party having control of the State Government expects to



make a party profit by courting those whose sympathies run in favor of "personal liberty," though that phrase is never heard here.

For more than thirty years we have been earnestly at work to strengthen the law. This has been accomplished in many ways, but not yet sufficiently done, although the amendments already made to it are very important. The party doles these out to us slowly, grudgingly, painfully on the part of the politicians, but in time, with patience, we shall succeed in our endeavor. The original Maine Law was given to us by the Democratic party in one day; while we have not yet obtained the desired amendments to it from the party now in power in forty years' continuous, persistent, hard work.

There are many people in our country who claim to be friends of temperance far wiser than those who favor prohibition as the last and only possible hope for the deliverance of the nation from the fearful curse of the liquor traffic. Many of these people are influential in the community, and with all their power they oppose the suppression of the grog-shops and favor what they call "High License," as the better way of dealing with the drink curse. Their platform is very small, and if founded in truth would be conclusive of the whole matter.

They say prohibition has failed everywhere that it has been tried, while high license regulates and restrains the liquor traffic; that prohibition is practically free rum. Unfortunately for them, not a word of that is true. Prohibition has not failed anywhere; wherever it has been tried it has diminished the volume of the liquor traffic; in some places sweeping it entirely away; in many places diminishing it more or less, as in Maine, Kansas, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Vermont. In Maine the volume of it remaining is far less than one-twentieth of its former magnitude.

There are in England, Scotland, and Ireland many places where prohibition (that is, refusal to license) exists, from which the liquor traffic has been entirely banished for many years. On the other hand, there has never been any place, under any form of license, where the demand for liquor has not always been fully supplied, whatever the demand might be; and that is free rum.





# WHAT PROHIBITION HAS DONE FOR MAINE.

BY NEAL DOW.

1. WE had many distilleries, seven of which and two breweries were in this city. Now we have not one in the State, nor has there been for many years.

2. At the same time a great quantity of West India rum was imported; it came to us by the cargoes, many of them every year. Now not even one puncheon is imported, nor has there been for many years.

3. Before prohibition, rum-shops were everywhere in the State, wholesale and retail; no hamlet so small or retired but the rum-seller found it and established a grog-shop there. Now, in more than three-fourths of the State, having three-fourths of our population, the grog-shop is unknown. An entire generation has grown up there, never having seen a saloon or the effects of one.

4. The quantity of liquor now sold in the State is not one-twentieth so great as it was before prohibition. In Portland, the largest city, the quantity sold is not one-hundredth part so much as it was, the city being twice larger than it was at the time the law was made.

5. Our people used to spend in strong drink the entire valuation of the State in every period of twenty years, as the nation is now doing in every period of thirty-five years. But now one million dollars will far more than pay for all the liquor smuggled into the State and sold in violation of law.

6. Our State saves annually, directly and indirectly, more than twenty millions of dollars, which but for prohibition would be spent, lost, and wasted in drink.

7. Maine is now one of the most prosperous States in the Union; but before the adoption of prohibition it was undoubtedly the poorest.

8. The whole face of the State has been changed for the better. Before the law there were conspicuous indications everywhere of dilapidation, unthrift, and decay in shabby churches, shabby school-houses, shabby dwellings, neglected and shabby barns. Now there is nothing of all that, but everywhere are seen conclusive proofs of industry, activity, enterprise, and thrift; no dilapidated or neglected buildings anywhere, either public or private, but everywhere unmistakable proofs of an industrious and thrifty people.

9. In 1884, after an experience of the benefits of prohibition for thirty-three years, that policy was put into our constitution by a popular vote, the majority being 47,075, the affirmative vote being three times larger than the negative. There can be no more convincing proof than this, that prohibition in Maine has not been "a failure," as the distillers and brewers declare it to be, but on the contrary a great success.

PORTLAND, ME., 1893.

