

CURRENT OPINION

December, 1921: p. 724

Northcliffe on Prohibition

VISCOUNT NORTHCLIFFE, who controls a number of newspapers in England, recently passed through America on a trip around the world.

While in our midst he made up his mind about Prohibition. In his opinion it is a failure, in which conclusion he agrees with Mr. Arbuckle.

His reasons seem to be that he saw plenty of liquor everywhere he was entertained; that Prohibition encourages hypocrisy in the vision of the law, and that he did not like it anyhow.

It is regrettable that a newspaper man who ought to be able to estimate public sentiment and see beneath the surface should have come to such a superficial conclusion.

Curiously enough, a Frenchman, Louis Forest, seems to have the vision to perceive the gist of the matter. The universal custom of drinking in France does not seem to have destroyed French intelligence. Forest says:

"Whatever you may say of it, Prohibition is the proof of the vitality of a people. Always the great nations of Europe are those who have been able to make great sacrifices for general health. So the dry Americans may say to us, 'Have your little joke, but they laugh best who laugh last.'"

Of course, Prohibition does not stop the surreptitious gin parties where young men are driven to madness and young women to ruin.

Neither does it stop the wilful rich, who value their own pleasure above the welfare of the community, from stocking their cellars with alcoholic goods. Nor does it quiet the curses of the disgusted hobo who misses his saloon, nor the elegant cynicism of the literary gentlemen who suspect anything that is moral of being bourgeois.

It will probably take a generation or so to get the alcoholic poison out of our blood and alcoholic reasoning out of our minds.

But America has taken its stand and will stick to it.

It will repeal Prohibition on about the same day that it repeals the Emancipation Proclamation, takes the vote away from the women, prohibits workmen from forming unions, repeals the Declaration of Independence and requests to be reunited with the British Empire.