

Senator Tillman's Attitude Toward the Dispensary-- His Views Given at Length.

Greenville, July 3.—Special to News and Courier: It had been accepted that Senator Tillman would discuss the dispensary law and situation at length in his speech here tomorrow. But this he will not do, his views being fully set forth in his letter which is made public today. The letter possesses far-reaching political significance in South Carolina and will be read with interest. It is as follows:

SENATOR TILLMAN'S LETTER.

Trenton, July 1, 1905.
Mr. Francis W. Higginson, Newberry, S. C.—Dear Sir: I have your letter of June 28, propounding certain inquiries in regard to the anti-dispensary movement in Newberry and to the dispensary and liquor questions in general, and to my own attitude towards it. The questions you ask relate to the misinterpreted subject now agitating the minds of the people of the State, and in order to cover the ground at all satisfactorily it will require me to answer at some length and to discuss the subject in its various phases, and this becomes the more necessary as you notify me in advance that you desire my answer for publication.

PREMISES OF THE ARGUMENT.

I shall premise what I write by laying down certain general principles which will be disputed only by those who are fanatical and unwilling to consider any subject from any other standpoint than that of bigotry and prejudice.

Most men will agree to the following:

1. All men love stimulants and are usually slaves to some kind, as witness the strong appetite which prevails for coffee, tea, tobacco, beer, wine, brandy, whiskey, morphine, quinine, cocaine, etc. With the exception of some of the drugs mentioned there are no injurious effects immediately perceptible and none of them intoxicate except those containing alcohol. Alcoholic beverages in moderation are not more harmful than tea or coffee, probably less so.

2. The abuse of liquor by men drinking to excess has caused as much or more crime and misery than any other thing.

3. The proper policing and control of the liquor traffic so as to minimize its abuses is one of the most perplexing and troublesome questions with which any government has to deal. Men have never agreed as to any one method being best and never will, and there is a constant agitation of the subject in some form going on all the while in almost every State in the Union.

4. Experience shows that some men will have liquor as a beverage and that no law has ever yet been devised which will prevent them obtaining it. Wise men are, therefore, content to reduce the evils of liquor selling and liquor drinking to the minimum, and the question at issue in South Carolina now, as it has been these fifteen or twenty years, is as how to do this.

NO NEED FOR PASSION.

There is no need, for any heat or passion in discussing the subject, and we should divest

ourselves of all prejudice in its consideration. Three policies have at one time or another been adopted in dealing with the question. License, high or low; prohibition and the dispensary system. Since 1893 the last named has been the method followed in this State, but all along there have been staunch advocates of the other two systems, embracing within their ranks many of the most intelligent and best people we have. It is, therefore, eminently proper that we recognize those earnest, honest advocates as having just what we claim for ourselves, no other than that of the public welfare. And those of us who have been the supporters of the dispensary system must meet them in argument, and show from experience through which the people of the State have passed, as well as with force and logic, that the advocates of both prohibition and high license are in error.

You ask, have you lost faith in the dispensary system, and do you consider it so inherently defective that it cannot be purged of corruption and made to serve its original purpose?

HAS NOT LOST HIS FAITH.

I answer most emphatically no, I believe the principle of State control and the sale of liquor through bonded officers to be the best that was ever devised, that it comes nearer to the ideal idea of teaching men to use liquor instead of abusing it, and throwing around it safeguards which will be the best for the cause of temperance. There is no inherent defect in the scheme, and if there be corruption and maladministration in the enforcing of the dispensary law, it is directly traceable to the Legislature, and to those who have been placed in charge of its execution. In the absence of any positive proof of corruption we must wait with deep interest the investigation which is now under way and urge those in charge of that important work to earnest, thorough and speedy action. The people believe there is corruption and a great deal of it. Very many things go to show that this belief has good foundation in fact. We ought to know as soon as possible just what and how far men have been guilty of unlawful behavior.

DISPENSARY UNDER A PALL.

The suspicion which now hangs over the dispensary like a pall will cause many to hastily vote for its destruction who are still or have been, strong believers in the dispensary system as a means of controlling the sale of whiskey. So I would say to the gentlemen who are in charge of the investigation that they can do the people of the State a great service by letting in the light and probing to the bottom. We want to know what is wrong, and we can then determine how to provide a remedy, while the criminal Courts will or ought to provide punishment for the wrongdoers.

The dispensary law has been under fire in the Courts, and on the hustings ever since the system was inaugurated. There has been only one general election in the State, the last, in which it was not an issue. It won victory after victory, for it was the

main issue in the election of '94," in the election of the Constitutional Convention in '95," and in the State election of '96," '98" and 1900 and 1902. Those candidates for public office, who carried its banners were always victorious.

WHY THIS UPHEAVAL?

What then has caused the present upheaval? Why are petitions circulated in a dozen or more counties asking for an election to vote it out under the Bryce law, and that, too, in counties in which its known advocates have always had large majorities? Have the people any greater faith in Prohibition than they have had all these past years? I do not think so.

Are the advocates of high license any stronger than they have been? I do not think so. I am bound to believe that the existing dissatisfaction and desire to destroy the dispensary comes from the well-nigh universal belief of the people that there is corruption in its administration and because the last Legislature failed to take any action other than to appoint a committee to investigate. There were charges, with how much truth they were made I do not know, that the dispensary influence in the Legislature was paramount. Anyhow the friends of the dispensary and its enemies joined force at the last session to prevent any action, and nothing was done, and unless public opinion shall drive the Legislature at its next session to some reform action, which will purify the atmosphere, there is no possible doubt that all elements of opposition to the dispensary, aided by many of its old friends, will combine in the next election and kill the system.

WILL NOT STAND BY CORRUPTION.

I do not hesitate to tell you frankly that if it has become, and is to remain a corrupt political machine as charged, I cannot defend it and will not do so, but will join the ranks of those who seek to kill it. I believe it can be reorganized and purged of corruption with safeguards thrown around it to prevent the recurrence of the present unfortunate and disgraceful condition of affairs. I cannot now go at length into the details and give reasons, but I will state briefly the causes, as I see them, which have produced the present situation.

WHAT HAS CAUSED THAT TROUBLE.

The purchase of liquor by any board ex officio or otherwise should be stopped. The original scheme, which was hastily gotten up, made the Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller General ex-officio, the State board of control. This was changed very soon after I left the Governor's office, and the Legislature assumed control by the election of the board, and in no instance since has my advice and opinion had any weight in shaping its management, though I have tried to prevent some things which were being done and have urged others without success. It stands to reason that men who have to depend upon the suffrage of the whole people to get high office are, or ought to be, of a higher type, with better characters, in every way better fitted for responsible positions involving the handling

of public money, than those who, with petty salaries, are elected by the Legislature.

Politics always enters into a legislative election. People who vote for a Governor vote for him because of other qualifications than that he would make a good dispensary director, and for this very reason the Governor is the best possible man to place in such a responsible position.

DEFECTS OF THE LAW.

But the law is fatally defective in regard to the purchase of whiskey in not specifically defining in the most minute and binding manner just what kinds of liquor shall be bought and how it shall be bought, without leaving it to the discretion of any board. Every detail should be worked out, and then the law would execute itself as far as that feature is concerned. The board would then need only to supervise the conduct of State and county dispensers, the same as the Asylum and Penitentiary are run.

OBJECTS TO COUNTY ELECTIONS.

But as regards the proposed election to vote out the dispensary. If the dispensary is to be voted out it should, and must, be voted out of the State, not by individual counties. Of course, I recognize the deep-seated love of the people for local self-government, and I would not compel any county to retain the dispensary or have one established therein if a majority of their citizens wanted prohibition, with its acknowledged failure to prohibit. But, judging simply by the facts in the numerous elections that have been held on the subject, I believe that a large majority of the people of the State are as strong believers in the dispensary system as I am, and that they are only casting about now for a method of relieving themselves of the corrupt machine, which is said to be in charge in Columbia. Many states in the Union have had corruption in their State Governments and their State Treasurers have defaulted, have sometimes stolen hundreds of thousands of dollars, but no man has ever thought of taxation because of this. We have got to deal with liquor some in form and provide for its legitimate sale or we know it will find illegitimate.

OBJECT TO HIGH LICENSE.

Shall we have high license? I say no. That gives the monopoly to the wealthy man as against the poor man, and we know from experience of bar rooms that it will be impossible to give any man the right to fill his store with liquor to sell, and then have him comply with the constitutional requirements and not sell it at night and not have it drunk on the premises. If the dispensary is abolished I will stump the State for prohibition rather than see high license. I have said this, and it is the reason, probably, that the story is going the rounds about my stumping for Prohibition or high license either, I expect, if my health continues good, to give a very earnest discussion to the subject of how to reform the dispensary instead of destroying it, and to showing the true inwardness of the present movement. Let us suppose that the present campaign against the dispensary by county elections shall progress victoriously, as it has thus far, and that the majority of the counties

in the State vote it out. Will the question be settled? By no means. The alliance of Prohibitionists, high license people and blind tigers, which is now waging successful war, will have to continue the war between themselves after the dispensary is defunct. Sensible men will not lend their aid to any crusade which only gives us "confusion worse confounded" and produces a chaotic condition with no compensation.

Under the decision of the united States Supreme Court prohibition and another State regulation can prevent liquor being shipped in by express for personal use of individuals and jug county traffic with Wilmington, Charlotte, Atlanta, Augusta and Savannah will be immense under prohibition, and the money which now goes into the dispensary for the use of the towns and counties of the State and the school fund will be sent out the State to enrich the dealers and distillers of other States. Stills will be run in every swamp and wagons will peddle liquor all over the country. The only fight worth enlisting in South Carolina is between Prohibition as rigidly enforced as it can be and the dispensary, as honestly enforced as it ought to be. High license is not to be thought of for a moment. Yet the prohibitionists say they prefer the dispensary to license and the license people say they prefer prohibition to the dispensary, while the blind tigers prohibit because they know it means free liquor.

WHY HE PREFERS A STATE VOTE.

The elections now being held in the counties to vote the dispensary out are very different from the Democratic primary election which will settle the question finally. In the first place, the vote in those counties where elections have been held against the dispensary has been very small as compared with the regular election. It requires a certificate of registration to vote at such an election, while in the primary the club rolls of the Democratic clubs govern.

Then men are indifferent, as they were in the prohibition election in 1892, when only sixty thousand of ninety-two thousand voters voted in that box. There are probably thirty thousand or more good Democrats in the State, who, from one cause or another, are not able to vote in the elections held under the Bryce Act. That law was shrewdly drawn and for the express purpose of killing the dispensary, I have been told. These thirty thousand will determine the question in the future as they have in the past because they will elect the Legislature and State officers in the State Democratic primary in spite of any combination, such as is now giving us prohibition by a negative process, voting out the dispensary, not because the people want prohibition, but giving us prohibition because some people want free liquor, some people prefer to buy illicit liquor, some people want high license and a return to the old bar room system, while many people will do any thing to kill the dispensary with the hope of profiting by its destruction. I would advise every advocate of the dispensary who is in doubt, to vote against putting the dispensary out of his county, until we see what the report of the investigating committee is, and then whether or not the Legisla-

ture, at its next session, will purge the corruption out of the dispensary system and put safeguards around it for the future. I say unhesitatingly it can be successfully conducted. The dispensary system has shown its strength in past elections because people thought it was honestly administered.

All that is necessary is to have them understand as they will understand by 1906, that they must kill the law in order to get rid of the corruption, and they will make short work of it.

It must be made clean or it must go. At present the campaign to vote it out, county by county, only brings about confusion, encourages blind tigers and causes the counties and State to lose money and settles nothing, and it is impossible to settle the question in this way. I repeat it can only be settled at the general Democratic primary when all the people have heard all sides and have made up their mind intelligently.

I desire to add in conclusion that practically I am a Prohibitionist here, I very rarely drink any liquor of any kind. If I believed that Prohibition could be enforced, understanding as I do most thoroughly the great evil attending the abuse of liquor, I would be a Prohibitionist, but knowing from the most searching investigation and from the official record of the United States Government that in Maine and Kansas, where Prohibition prevails, there has been a most dismal failure to enforce the law, I prefer the dispensary as the lesser evil and as I have often said in the past, I believe that State control comes nearer to the management of this troublesome question than any other. I have no personal interest in view and am only actuated by a sense of public duty in taking the position I have occupied in the past and which I shall continue to occupy.

I have always believed in the majority. But I want it to be the majority of the Democrats in the State.

(Signed) B. R. Tillman.

Several Persons Badly Wounded.

Columbia Record, 4th Inst.

News was received in the city this afternoon from Gaston, in Lexington county, about sixteen miles south of Columbia, of a serious shooting affray. It seems that a public barbecue was given there to-day and crowds of people from the surrounding country were present. Mack Jerriette, Rembert Moore, Elliott Pound, T. E. Reese and Jos Reese were those who took the opportunity to settle some old quarrels that had been in existence a number of years. It started by Pound knocking Jerriette down, and when the latter arose he began shooting. The others pulled pistols and knives and when the crowd finally got things quiet, it was found that T. E. Reese was shot in the stomach and with die, Jos. Reese had been shot in the hip and was dangerously wounded, Mack Jerriette was cut in the side and back. His injuries will also prove fatal.

TWO BOTTLES CURED HIM

"I was troubled with kidney complaint for about two years," writes A. H. Davis, of Mt. Sterling, Ia., "but two bottles of Foley's Kidney Cure effected a permanent cure." Sold by Funderburk Pharmacy.