

**THE GOTHENBURG  
LICENSING  
SYSTEM. LECTURE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649350179

The Gothenburg Licensing System. Lecture by Bailie Lewis

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Cover @ 2017

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THE GOTHENBURG LICENSING SYSTEM.

# LECTURE

BY

BAILIE LEWIS,

*Delivered at a Public Meeting held in Queen Street Hall,  
Edinburgh, on the Evening of the 14th July 1873,*

WITH

*Report of a Meeting convened for the purpose  
of hearing Reply by Mr Carnegie.*



EDINBURGH:

WILLIAM OLIPHANT & Co., 57 FREDERICK STREET.

GLASGOW: D. ROBERTSON, & PORTEOUS BROTHERS.

1873.



## LECTURE BY BAILIE LEWIS,

DELIVERED AT A PUBLIC MEETING

HELD IN

QUEEN STREET HALL, EDINBURGH, on 14th JULY 1873.

At a crowded meeting held in Queen Street Hall, Edinburgh, July 14th, 1873, Bailie LEWIS delivered a lecture on the working of the Gothenburg licensing scheme and the Swedish licensing laws. The chair was occupied by the Rev. Dr BEGG, and on the platform were a large number of the leading and influential citizens of Edinburgh, as well as a number of prominent temperance reformers from other towns in the kingdom. Amongst those present were Bailies Blanchard, Leith, and Torrens, Glasgow; Councillors Gowans, Lees, Sloan, Donald, Mitchell, Durham, Falshaw, Crichton, Anderson, and Macdougald, Edinburgh; M'Nab and Waldie, Leith; Paterson, Aberdeen; Hutton, Linlithgow; and Campbell, Portobello; Rev. Dr Taylor, Westruther; Rev. Messrs Jones, Liverpool; Williamson, Queensferry; Graham, Newhaven; Jamieson and F. Johnston, Portobello; Simpson, Musselburgh; Carter, Leith; Gillison, Roberts, Cochrane, Seton, Bowden, Divorty, Kirk, Morgan, and Antliff, Edinburgh; Rev. J. Russell, R.W.G.T., I.O.G.T.; Rev. Mr Robertson, Michigan; Mr Van Doorn, I.O.G.T.; Messrs J. H. Raper, Manchester; R. O. Shirtevan and C. H. Baker, Vermont; Selkirk and M'Kay, Glasgow; Carnegie, Stronvar; Niven, Abercorn; Thomson, Tod, and Blair, Dalkeith; Blair, Lasswade; Henderson and Miller, Portobello; Dr Bowie, Edinburgh; Messrs Gillespie, Waterston, Inglis, Bladworth, Westren,

Tait, Telfer, H. Murray, A. Murray, A. G. Murray, Milne, R. D. Ker, Butters, Hill, M'Vey, G. M'Kay, M'Lean, Porteous, etc., etc.

The CHAIRMAN said,—Before introducing the lecturer, who requires no introduction in our city—(applause),—I must say that I esteem it a high honour to preside on this important occasion. The man knows little of the workings of society who is not prepared to admit that there is no question that has a closer connection with Christian progress or with the interests of true patriotism than the question of temperance. Luther spoke of one doctrine as the doctrine by which the Church would stand or fall; and I have no hesitation in saying that the temperance question may be said—considering its various ramifications—to be the question on which our State and our Church will stand or fall. I have always considered the licensing system an important question, and I am glad that men of such high intelligence as Bailie Lewis are giving it their consideration. (Applause.) We are to hear to-night—and I have no doubt with much interest—an account of the licensing system of Gothenburg. I fear there is a dead fly in that pot of ointment. (Laughter.) I fear that the municipalities might be tempted, if they became universal purveyors of drink, to be enamoured of the system. I would trust them—much as we have had said in Edinburgh—to supply water much more readily. (Great laughter and applause.) I have much pleasure in introducing Bailie Lewis. (Cheers.)

BAILIE LEWIS, who was received with applause, said—The vast expenditure of the resources of the United Kingdom upon intoxicating liquors, and the demoralising influence of intemperance upon our social and religious institutions, is creating a general feeling of uneasiness and alarm as to the future of our country, more especially among statesman and ministers of religion. As the result of this feeling of general anxiety, a spirit of earnest solicitude for the removal of the drink curse pervades the entire community, not excepting some of those who have a pecuniary interest in its development. Hence we find that any proposal which promises relief from its intolerable burdens is hailed with satisfaction by many, who, wearied with the devastations of the evil, are impatient to rid themselves of its merciless pressure.



## THE GOTHENBURG SCHEME.

Among the latest proposals submitted for the modification or removal of our national vice is that of the Gothenburg plan, pressed upon the people of Scotland by David Carnegie, Esq. of Stronvar, and whom I am delighted to have with us on the platform. Having had the honour to be among the first waited upon by Mr Carnegie in reference to his laudable desire to deal a practical blow at the intemperance of Scotland, I promised to give his scheme an impartial consideration, and, if it approved itself to my judgment as a social and temperance reformer, to give it my hearty support. (Applause.) On looking narrowly into the subject, I found there were many points upon which information was indispensable before I could commit myself to the scheme, and as numerous inquiries were reaching me concerning it, I felt sufficiently interested to resolve to pay, during a month's holiday, a personal visit to Sweden, that I might see for myself the operation of her licence laws, more especially in Gothenburg. (Hear, hear.) In carrying out my resolution I was successful in securing the company of two gentlemen animated by the same spirit of inquiry, and whose names are recognised throughout the United Kingdom as distinguished temperance reformers. I refer to the Rev. Mr Jones, of Liverpool, and Mr J. H. Raper, of Manchester, both of whom I am pleased to see with us on the present occasion. (Applause.)

## IMPRESSIONS OF SWEDEN.

In compliance with an influential requisition, I have much pleasure in submitting my impressions of Sweden and the operation of its licence laws, more especially in Gothenburg, after a fortnight's ramble in that interesting country. After a brief sojourn in the northern part of Germany and Denmark, I crossed from Copenhagen to Malmo, a seaport on the Swedish coast. The first thing that struck me on landing was the depressed appearance of many of the people, some of whom presented sad traces of social deterioration. The contrast between the people of Germany and Denmark and those upon the Swedish coast struck me as remarkable. I had visited the slums of Hamburg, and with the police penetrated into its "midnight hells," and although I saw an amount of drunken-

ness in Germany, more especially in Hamburg, the decorum, self-respect, and politeness of the Germans and Danes were most striking. While among them I did not see a person in rags or a child barefooted; but no sooner had I entered Sweden than I found mendicants and barefooted children in the streets, resembling those in our own country. To those familiar with the effects of intoxicating liquor upon its victims, the number of shops for the sale of *bränvin* (that is, Swedish brandy, containing 50 per cent. of alcohol) rendered inquiry as to the demoralisation of the people unnecessary. On leaving Malmö, we pushed our way into the interior, desirous to ascertain somewhat of the industrial and political position of the peasantry of Sweden. Breaking the journey at Christianstad, and spending a few hours on the way at Hesselholm, a place notorious for its dissipation, we next day drove some fifty miles eastward in one of the rude vehicles of the country, and had thus ample opportunity of being brought personally into contact with the inhabitants. One thing that strikes the stranger in Sweden is the large proportion of arable land devoted to the cultivation of potatoes. In my ignorance, I concluded that this was for the purpose of exportation, that the country might thereby be enriched, but my delusion was dispelled by a conversation with a clergyman and others, who informed me that the potatoes were being largely cultivated for the distillation of *bränvin*—not for the enriching, but for the impoverishing of the people.

#### HABITS OF THE SWEDES.

The habits and condition of the Swedes I felt to be an interesting study. They appear civil, obliging, and patient and forbearing under treatment, which, in this country, many would regard as harsh and oppressive. I found them cutting trees, blasting rocks, and working in the fields from four o'clock in the morning till eight at night, with two and a-half hours for meals, and receiving as little as 11d. per day. In estimating the value of this sum we must, however, not forget that provisions are much cheaper there than in this country. Notwithstanding that some of them had to travel three and a-half miles from their homes to their work, I was surprised, on conversing with some of them—through those that could speak English—to find that they were wonderfully recon-

ciled to their apparently unenviable lot. At the same time I found them depressed in spirits, and many of them without much hope of changing their position, although in towns there are indications of improvement. I found that in Stockholm, and more especially in Gothenburg, the skilled artisans were being united for the purpose of improving their condition. (Applause.) I found that in Gothenburg many of them were receiving as much as two and some two and a-half rix-dollars—that is, 2s. 3d. and 2s. 10d. a day; and that, with the help of several philanthropic citizens, they were in course of erecting a large hall for literary purposes and public meetings.

#### POLITICAL CONDITION OF THE SWEDES.

The political condition of that most interesting people is no less to be deplored. In answer to inquiries, I learned that no person was allowed to vote in the election of a member of the Diet, or Parliament, whose income did not amount to 800 rix-dollars, or £45 in English money; so that the working classes of Sweden, with their generally small incomes, may be regarded as almost universally unenfranchised. The qualification for voters in the election of the commune, or local authority, is the same, with this addition, that duplicate voting is allowed, which places the local administration more completely in the hands of capitalists. So completely reduced are the labouring classes to political serfdom, and so helpless are they under the control of local administration, that one gentleman told us that while a few working men had one vote, he, in virtue of his money and property qualification, could personally record several hundreds of votes in the election of the commune. The injustice to which the working classes of Sweden are subjected is bringing its own penalty in the increasing tide of emigration flowing out towards the United States and elsewhere. There were on board the vessel in which I sailed from Gothenburg to Hull 400 emigrants, and the captain told me that in the two preceding voyages no fewer than 1300 had been on board. When it is considered that, as in this country, those who leave are among the most virtuous and industrious—the very stamina of the nation—the short-sighted and suicidal policy of those who in Sweden refuse to recognise more fully the claims of labour, and to ameliorate the condition of the labouring classes, will become apparent. (Applause.)