

**THE BREAKDOWN OF  
THE GOTHENBURG  
SYSTEM**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649157532

The breakdown of the Gothenburg system by Ernest Gordon

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ERNEST GORDON**

**THE BREAKDOWN OF  
THE GOTHENBURG  
SYSTEM**



*The Breakdown of the  
Gothenburg System*

# THE BREAKDOWN OF THE GOTHENBURG SYSTEM

By ERNEST GORDON

*"The Gothenburg procedure of bringing up the drink-ticks, suppressing some and operating others, has naturally from our point of view no justification. It suits only the schemes of those who believe in 'moderation' and who will neither work for nor understand a thoroughgoing reform. It goes without saying that for all clear heads universal prohibition is the end aimed at."*—Dr. Matthaci, Physician on the General Staff of the German Army.

*"We have a good army for reviews but a bad one for war."*—Persian Official to Lord Curzon.

*"What medicine cannot touch, iron will heal, and what iron will not heal, fire will cure."*

Published by  
The National Temperance Society and Publication House,  
373 Fourth Ave., New York.

HV 5092  
.57

Copyright 1911  
By The American Issue Publishing Company

Publication rights transferred to The National Temperance Society  
and Publication House.

THE NATIONAL TEMPERANCE SOCIETY  
PUBLICATION HOUSE

NOTE—The words *Samlag* and *Bolag* are the Norwegian and Swedish synonyms respectively for the word *Company*. They are loosely used for drink-selling places.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

# The Breakdown of the Gothenburg System

---

## CHAPTER I. Introduction.

There have been hitherto two classes of reporters on the Gothenburg System,—first, the theoretical who explain how admirably it must work because of the ingenuity of its mechanism;—secondly, the statistical who seek to prove by figures of declining consumption that it does work, all the while neglecting the historical and prohibitory factors to which these results are chiefly due.

What is now needed is a third kind of reporter who will show how little satisfactorily the System actually does work. He has but to live in any Scandinavian community, small or large, where the Company shop is planted and to snap from time to time his mental kodak. He will soon get material enough to disprove the fairest Gothenburg theory.

This little booklet is an assortment of such pictures which have been sent at intervals to American papers. It has nothing in it of Wordsworth's



"keen research,  
Unbiased, unbewildered, and unmoved."

The book which will prove scientifically the failure of the Gothenburg System to solve the drink problem is yet to be written. This is published as a possible stop-gap until such a work appears. It is hoped that it may give pause to any well-meaning efforts to transplant this institution to America as a substitute for prohibition.

The great advantage of prohibitory legislation is that it sooner or later weans the population as a whole from the drink habit. Anyone who has lived a few years in Northern New England would be convinced of this if he but recalled the conditions prevailing there fifty years ago when drink was used on harvest fields, at barn raisings, at "musters," at weddings, at funerals, at church-dedications and at every other function of social life. The enemies of prohibition insist that alcoholism is but driven under. The Committee of Fifty, for example, claims that this concealed alcoholism is indicated by an excessive consumption of patent medicines in prohibition areas. Such an abnormal consumption is, however, but a figment of these investigators' mythopoeic fancy. There is absolutely no statistical or other reliable proof of its existence. Turning to Scandinavia on the other hand one finds the Company drink-shop continually educating new relays into the drink habit. And the substi-

tutes which do not play an important rôle in Maine appear here alongside of the ordinary drinks. The sequence is first beer, then spirits, then every imaginable villanous compound. Thus one reads in a Swedish newspaper of a little town in Darlecarlia, that charming, picturesque, and characteristically Swedish province, where the angry people get together in mass-meeting to protest against the sale by the local druggist of lyptol, salubrin, and eau de cologne as beverages. Indeed the abnormal appetite developed by the Gothenburg drink-shop has carried drinkers so far that Swedish chemists are considering the desirability of putting emetics in denatured spirits.<sup>(1)</sup> The 1909

---

(1) Socialists in Mohlycke (28 Feb. '09) consider the following question: "What can be done to prevent the use of denatured spirits as a drink?"

It was reported "that denatured spirits were widely used for this purpose among working men and that the consequences were ruinous to body and brain in an extreme degree."

Mr. Karlsson of Gothenburg offered (1910) to the Swedish parliament a bill to regulate the sale of denatured spirits. He wants the amount sold to a given person limited, the hours of sale reduced and the number of selling places cut down. He said in his speech introducing the measure: "We have sad experiences in Gothenburg and the neighboring parishes where furniture is made in hundreds of homes, of the way in which denatured spirits are used for intoxicating drink. This abuse has so developed that the guardians of the poor in Gothenburg are urging thorough reform in the matter of selling industrial alcohol." That there is need of government action appears from the last report of the chief

report of the Christiania Samlag says (p. 17): "In spite of a sharp control on the part of the police—uniformed and secret—it has not been possible to overcome the illegal sale of brandy and of furniture polish for drinking purposes. This illegal brandy sale seems almost to increase on the streets and in doorways, although many have been brought before the courts and very heavy fines have been imposed as a rule. Denatured spirits also are still used for intoxication in various parts of the city." And within ten days of the writing an order has been issued by the Norwegian government to all sellers of furniture polish in Christiania to desist from selling that article at hours when the Company shops are closed. Would such an order be required in Portland, Maine, or Fargo, N. Dakota?

The Gothenburg System while constantly renewing the constituency of alcoholists furnishes no effective guarantee against illegal selling. Indeed the fulfilling of its first malign function clears the way for the last named phenomenon. Students of the alcohol problem are beginning to realize that, paradoxical as it may seem at first thought, illicit sale flourishes where the sale of drink is legalized even more than in prohibitory places. In Philadelphia, for example, the number of speak-easies according to the Committee

---

provincial physician of Gävleborg province. He declares that cologne, salubrin, etc., are bought and drunk to a very wide extent and that the vice is spreading, especially in Hälsingland.