Cobb Hits Failure Of Prohibition

Says Hoover's 'Noble Experiment' Might As Well Apply to Frisco Fire or Galveston Flood

Washington, July 29.—(Special.)—That President Hoover's definition, "a noble experiment," could as well be applied to the San Francisco fire and the Galveston flood as to prohibition, "by the light of what goes on hourly and dully before our very eyes," was asserted by Irvin S. Cobb today in accepting the chairmanship of the Authors and Artists Committee made up of 371 writers and artists, who have volunteered to support the work of the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment. "We have only to take the ordinary experiences of the ordinary man, along with his personal knowledge, and the dependable hearsay testimony which comes to his ears, and the indictment stands complete and perfected," he added.

"All of us, nearly, were glad to see the licensed saloon go," said Mr. Cobb. "We didn't anticipate that the unlicensed, untaxed, uncontrolled speak-easy would take its place.

Amateur Alcoholics Develop.

"A great many of us believed that prohibition, so-called, would reduce crime and cut down drunkenness. We see now that under its workings a new class of criminals, bolder, more violent, more active, better organized, better financed, better protected and

(Concluded on Page 2.)
Irvin Cobb Hits
Prohibition Law

(Continued from Page 1)

more dangerous than any we previous-ly had, has been produced; and
that the burden of drunkenness merely has been shifted from one set of shoulders to another set of shoulders—or in other words, while some of the seasoned inebriates of the older generation found the taste of intoxicants cut down or cut off, a large and growing proportion of amateur alcoholics developed among the younger generation. Or, putting it yet another way, the law succeeded in protecting from his own weaknesses the man who already had wasted his usefulness and offended his family through over-indulgence, but counter-acted disastrously upon the flower of our youth by involving the practice of drinking with the false glamour of a forbidden and clandestine adventure.

Growing Contempt For Law.

Regardless of how we might feel touching on what many of us regarded as an invasion upon our personal liberty, we trusted that a higher state of public morality, a greater degree of sobriety, a deeper respect for the law might follow the enactment of the Volstead Act. We now know that millions of otherwise orderly citizens are engaged in constant violations of the letter and spirit of that act. We admit—because with the multiplying evidence before our eyes we must admit it—that the commonest or at least the most outstanding by-products of this general evasion of statutory regulations are corruption, bribery of officials, and a growing contempt for law and order. We know there must be millions of such citizens because it requires the services of thousands of bootleggers and hundreds of thousands of illegal distillers of hard liquor to keep them supplied with drink. We need not look to statistics to prove our case because statistics may be twisted to suit the purposes of any argument or any counter argument. We have only to take the ordinary experiences of the ordinary man, alone with his personal knowledge, and the dependable hearsay testimony which comes to his ear, and the indictment stands complete and perfected.

"In the heat of a campaign our President called Prohibition a noble experiment." By the time of this writing it goes on hourly and daily before our very eyes. I am constrained to believe that if Prohibition is a noble experiment, then the San Francisco fire and the California flood should also be listed among the noble experiments of our national history.

Confesses Impotence.

"We have seen our Federal Government setting its machinery in motion invoking the power of its authority to enforce a certain law and we have seen our government reduced to the humiliating attitude of having practically to confess that it has no control over the attitude of the people themselves. It is impotent to enforce the said law.

"We have heard it said that in the present temper of a majority of American voters, the Eighteenth Amendment will not be repealed, neither will it be amended. This may or may not be true, but at least we of the alleged present minority have as much right to assert for its repeal or its re-interpretation by Congress as our opponents have to clamor for its enforcement.

"Before us lies a hope. Behind them lies only the record of a failure."