Best Friend of the Wets

(New York Times.)

Mr. Wayne D. Wheeler, counsel of the Anti-Saloon League, continues to give aid and comfort to the enemies of prohibition, to discourage adequate enforcement of the Volstead act, to weary and disgust reasonable men and women. Still under the impression that the League is a sort of super-government and dictator, he infests the White House. His latest proclamation, "Mr. Buckner, the federal district attorney here, has pursued a sensible new policy, whose effectiveness can be judged by its visible results. He cleared the federal courts of the accumulated petty cases with which their calendars were cluttered up. Strike at the big offenders, the big merchandisers and consumers of rum, and the futile war against the half-pint flash will be largely unnecessary."

There is work for a generation at least; work that, in the cities at any rate, can never be more than partially successful until they are populated by a race of beings made to the order of the Anti-Saloon League. Mr. Buckner has begun it vigorously. He has put the fear of the law into many purple, notorious violators. The padlock has ceased to be a joke. His name has the sympathy and the support of General Andrews and other responsible prohibition officials. But to Mr. Wheeler, still flushed with that noble triumph, the saloon replaced by the "spoke-curse," this fruitful scheme of enforcement is but the subject of a sneer.

Mr. Buckner hardly needed to pay any attention to Mr. Wheeler, whose methods are not those of discussion but of concision; nor do we agree with the former's reiterated suggestion of federal police courts. It is not likely to be carried out; and it is in opposition to Mr. Buckner's main policy, the only real hope, if hope there be, of general substantial enforcement. At great expense the sea and the land are patrolled. If the supplies, foreign and domestic, can't be greatly cut off, a thousand courts dealing with a million barkeepers, waiters, pleasure dealers and carriers will not earn their salt. Meanwhile, Mr. Wheeler, the Anti-Saloon League and a whole congeries of intemperate, fanatical boards and busybodies are doing nothing but denounce honest, rational, practicable enforcement. They are tickling the wets to death. They are sickening that large part of the public which has a hard time enough to preach and practice enforcement of a law in whose principles and details it disbelieves.

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