

tion and sale of alcoholic liquors. The idea gained many adherents, and at the general election to Althingi in 1908 the government also arranged for a vote on the question of prohibition. Of the three-fifths of the electorate who voted at this election, 60 per cent. were in favour of prohibition. In view of this Althingi found it necessary to deal with the question, and this resulted in the act of 1909, prohibiting the importation of any kind of liquor containing more than $2\frac{1}{4}$ volume per cent. of alcohol, with the exception of that destined for medical, technical, and scientific uses. The prohibition law became operative from the 1st of Jan. 1912, but a period of three years was allowed for dealers to sell their stocks, and on the 31st of December 1915 all bar and retail licences expired.

At the time of, and during the next following years after, the introduction of prohibition in Iceland, no difficulties were raised by the wine-producing countries; but when Norway and Finland also introduced prohibition, dissatisfaction was rife, and in 1921 Spain denounced her commercial treaty with Denmark-Iceland, refusing to renew it unless Iceland allowed the importation of Spanish wines containing up to 21 volume per cent. of alcohol. As Spain buys by far the greatest part of Iceland's staple export commodity, the fish, a non-renewal of the treaty would have entailed very serious consequences, for the duty on Icelandic fish exported to Spain would have been greatly raised. The Icelandic government and Althingi found it therefore advisable to yield to the demands of Spain, and in 1922 a law was passed allowing the importation of wines of not more than 21 volume per cent. of alcohol. With regard to ardent spirits and beer with $2\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. alcohol or more, the prohibition law is still in force. By an act of 1921 the importation and sale of liquors was placed under the *Áfengisverzlun ríkisins* (see p. 79). A wine shop has been set up in every town, where light wines (with less than 21 volume per cent. alcohol) are retailed, while stronger wines and spirits are obtainable at chemist's shops, but only as medicines prescribed by physicians.

When the prohibition law had been passed in 1909, temperance agitation greatly abated. The I.O.G.T. had gained its aim and caused Bacchus to be permanently banished from the country. There now seemed nothing more for the society to do, and the membership decreased so rapidly that in 1918 it had come down to 2600. But before long it became apparent that in spite of plebiscite and prohibition, the „Drainage“ of the country was anything but complete. The quantities of liquor imported for medicinal purposes proved larger than had been