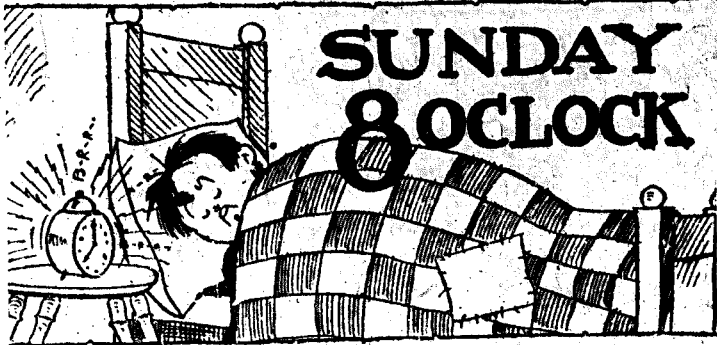


# SUNDAY 8 O'CLOCK



## PROHIBITIONS

These paragraphs are not an argument either in favor of national prohibition or against it. They have to do with prohibitions in general. The success or failure of the Volstead Act has been settled so completely, whichever view you take, by individuals generally, in railroad trains and barber shops and hotel lobbies and sewing societies that there is nothing left to be said.

It was, however, about drinking that Mrs. Gillen was speaking. There had been some evidences of hilarity the night previous in the hotel at which we were staying. There were suspicious looking bottles standing about, and a particular aroma in the air that did not suggest either violets or roses—an aroma, by the way, with which Mrs. Gillen was familiar and upon which she commented.

“Whenever you make a law prohibiting anything you are sure to make things worse. There wouldn't be half so much drinking if there wasn't a law against it.”

I have learned long ago the futility of arguing with anyone, and more especially with a woman, so I said nothing. Carrying Mrs. Gillen's statement to its logical conclusion, however, law is futile. We should be better off without it. If she is correct, then Moses made a great mistake when he promulgated the Ten Commandments. Instead of lightening things up and making for a better society, as he no doubt intended, the tablets of stone simply acted as a red rag to stimulate the Israelites to thievery and murder and covetousness and all the other deadly sins. A great mistake was made in that conference upon Mount Sinai.

If Mrs. Gillen is correct then our law makers are a menace to society—as some radical people actually do hold—and traffic regulations and policemen standing at street corners simply act as incentives to aggravate evil. We should do away with all of them. I am sure she would not go so far as this, however, and that she did not think out just what her statement implied, any more than do many other people who make similar statements.

Some laws are not wise laws and some prohibitions stimulate revolt more than do others because to some people they seem unreasonable and unjust. There are people, too, young people especially, who rebel against a prohibition of any sort. They do not like to be told to keep off the grass or not to drive their cars more than thirty-five miles an hour, but laws do restrain. Prohibitions are in general effective. If this were not true, law makers and those whose duty it is to enforce law would have learned the fact by this time, for prohibitions have been laid down and law enforced since intelligence characterized the human race.

Moses made no mistake when he laid down the Ten Commandments. No doubt the discussion of them was quite general, and possibly, for a time at least, they stimulated revolt on the part of some smart Alocs who claimed they interfered with a man's personal rights, they were based upon bad psychology and were constitutionally wrong, and they were sure they would never work; but on the whole virtue and morality were increased by them. Eventually other prohibitions may prove equally worth while.