

SENATE....No. 55.

P E T I T I O N .

To the Senate and House of Representatives of Massachusetts, in General Court assembled :

The petition of the undersigned humbly showeth,

That we are now occupants of the House of Correction at South Boston, under sentence of law for various offences and misdemeanors ; and we would respectfully represent, that, without a single exception, we consider that we owe our unhappy position here, and our still more unhappy steps that brought us here, to the use of intoxicating drinks ; and that we owe that habit chiefly, if not entirely, to the temptations or inducements or facilities thrown in our way by the licensed bar-rooms, or dram shops, that are kept open, under the sanction of the law, in all parts of the city.

By the habit contracted in these legalized nurseries of drunkenness, we were, at times, more or less rendered incapable of the use of our reason, and of judging correctly of the moral character, or of the miserable consequences of our conduct.

We have fallen, and we feel humbled ; but we are not

entirely without hope. While we have been here, confined within these walls, we have been kept out of the reach of temptation to use these drinks, for they have been kept out of our sight. We are relieved from the tortures of a constant struggle with the tempter, and from the still greater agonies of yielding to his power. We look forward to the time of our discharge from these cells with hope, but, at the same time, with many fears; with hope that "the time past of our lives may suffice us to have wrought the will" of this destructive appetite, and that we may hereafter show that we have been indeed corrected by what we have been made to suffer. But yet we look forward to our discharge with fear. Remembering and deploring our weakness in the days that are past, we distrust our strength for those that are to come. When we again go forth, the eyes of those, who have already seen us to our hurt, will be again fixed upon us, and the remembrance of their former triumphs over us will make them more importunate and impudent in their renewed solicitations. Their doors, if still kept open—their windows, holding out to the passer-by the instruments of our former defeat, will be surrounded, if they still live, by the companions and witnesses of our past disgrace. We wish to avoid them. But while these gates are kept open at every corner of the streets, that will be impossible. Old scenes, old habits, old companions and old seductions, we fear, may be too much for our new resolutions—too much for us firmly and finally to resist.

We entreat your honorable body to interpose in our behalf. We ask, if all laws, licensing the sale of intoxicating drinks within this Commonwealth, may not at once be repealed, without prejudice to the *general* good.

We feel that, in asking this, we ask what will be for the *ultimate* good of those who have done us *no* good,—those who have sold us what brought us here. Will not your honorable body do all that is in your power to “deliver us from this evil.” Though fallen, we hope we have a Saviour yet. In the words of our Saviour, we pray, “*lead us not into this temptation.*” If it be possible to avoid it, subject us not to these trials of our oft-defeated virtue. We are now sober—thanks to the discipline of this prison-house ; and, *in* all soberness, we entreat that these lures to drunkenness may not be obtruded upon us. Now in the enjoyment of our reason, we pray that this spoiler of our reason may not again meet us as an armed man—armed with the authority of the law. We feel safe here, for *here* there is no one lying in wait for us. We tread firmly, with a feeling of security. We entreat that the law may afford us a like protection when we go forth from this confinement. We pray that the pitfalls that are open in the streets of the city for the unwary, may be filled up, lest, when we once more walk among them, we again drop into them and be LOST.

Signed,

WATERMAN WOOD,

and others.

IN SENATE, March 6, 1838.

Referred to the Committee on the License Laws, with instructions to cause the same to be printed, excepting the names.

Sent down for concurrence.

CHA'S. CALHOUN, *Clerk.*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, March 7, 1838.

Concurred,

L. S. CUSHING, *Clerk.*