

## **THE PEORIA PROTEST.**

The findings of the Peoria grand jury disclose an outrage upon private liberty which has no match since Louis XIV. sent his dragoons into the homes of Frenchmen to persecute them in the name of God. Many of these French Huguenots fled to America to escape this persecution of the great monarch who said "I am the state," and they and other men and women refugees from old world oppression left to their descendants, the founders of our free nation, a wholesome fear of the unbridled will of governments, whether it is the will of a king or of a masterful bureaucracy or of a mob. They feared tyranny in any form, however plausible, and they loved liberty and proposed to make it secure in our institutions. They knew liberty could be betrayed in the name of a good cause and in the guise of high purposes, but they believed they could make the citizen safe by the clear assertion of his right to trial by his peers, to immunity from unreasonable and peremptory invasion of his home, and to the other precious guarantees of personal liberty they embodied in our fundamental law.

Were our forefathers mistaken in their optimism? It is about time we found out. Is the bill of rights a scrap of paper or a list of outworn assertions which no reforming zealot need respect in legislation or enforcement?

The outrages committed in Peoria are, of course, repudiated by conscientious supporters of prohibition, but that is no consolation to the victims and no assurance to Americans who realize that such outrages are inevitable excesses of power. In the prohibition experiment government enters the private life to impose itself upon private conscience and private judgment, and inevitably its agents will assume more and more power, and tend to abuse it. The Peoria excesses, offensive and outrageous as they were, were not the worst instances of this insolent abuse of power. The lives of citizens have been endangered, as in the Detroit river and on the Atlantic coast, where private pleasure boats have been shot at by dry law patrols, or as in Tennessee, where a youth was seriously wounded on Signal mountain, Tennessee, while driving with his sweetheart. There was also the tragic death of the world war veteran, Buongore, shot down by the prohibition agent, Fubershaw, at Havre de Grace. These may be extreme incidents, but they are typical of the spirit of domination which is the soul of the attempt to impose a code of private habit by force of government regardless of American principles of liberty. Prohibition is a dismal failure as a method of bringing about universal teetotalism, but it is worse than a failure, for it is a return to the ancient fallacy of the all pervasive state.