Legislation upon a subject in which there are conflicting interests is necessarily difficult and often fails of accomplishment, even where the desired ends are plain. The pressure brought upon the law-making bodies by both parties results either in compromise measures obnoxious to both, or in a law favorable to one, which, bitterly opposed by the other, is made a political issue or assailed in some other way and finally repealed without effecting its purpose. The theory of all bankrupt laws is plain. The estate of a debtor which is not sufficient to satisfy all of his liabilities should be ratably divided among all of his creditors. But the conflicting interests of the debtor and creditor, the one to obtain more exemption and to be able to prefer certain creditors from whom he may derive some advantage to himself, the other to increase his remedies against the debtor, in many cases prevent the passage of equitable laws on the subject. Under the head of insolvent or assignment laws there are, in almost every State, provisions on the subject. But a discharge under a State insolvent law is only good against home creditors. The provisions in no two States bear much resemblance to one another. One State having more debtors than creditors and other States vice versa, the laws are made in the interest of the majority. Under the assignment laws of many, perhaps a majority of the States, assignments with preferences by a corporation are held valid by the courts. The only three national bankrupt laws which were ever passed were only allowed to remain a few years each. The idea of a national bankrupt law was not unpopular, but not one of the
three acts was fitted to remain as a permanent rule for the regulation of insolvent estates and the matter has been left to the States. Undoubtedly, at the present time, a uniform law on the subject is needed but, so far, it seems to have been impossible to reconcile the different interests and to enact a just and practical law. The defeat by Congress of the Torrey bill, which was generally favored by the bar, is to be regretted. If such a one could be passed at the present time it would prove almost a blessing to many, and surely a vast improvement and advance on the present varied systems of the States.

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The liquor question has occasioned much controversy and legislation, yet little advance has been made in mitigating the evils connected with the drink traffic. A system, new to this country, has lately been advocated by social reformers who have seen the failure of the expedients tried in various States. This system is the Gothenburg system of liquor traffic which has stood the test of more than a quarter of a century of successful operation in Sweden and Norway. Briefly, this plan modified to suit American needs, is as follows: The complete monopoly of the retail liquor traffic in a city or district is given to a corporation, formed expressly for the purpose. This corporation has the entire control and management of all places where intoxicants are sold. It determines how many saloons shall be allotted to each district, where they shall be located, what their hours of business shall be and what regulations shall govern each place. The decision of the corporation in these matters, however, is not final, but subject to review by the courts, and, if there is dissatisfaction with any act of the company, an appeal can be taken to the courts whose judgment is conclusive. The manager and employees receive fixed salaries which do not depend on the amount of liquor sold, but it is for their interest to sell as little as possible. A restaurant and reading-room are connected with each saloon, but apart from the drinking room, so as to preserve the social features of the present saloon, for it is undeniable that the saloon is now the poor man's club, a social center where he meets and converses with his fellow-workmen. Special provisions are made so that hotels and restaurants desiring to sell liquor are allowed to do so under the supervision of the corporation, which receives all the profits arising therefrom. The net profits of the corporation from the sale of liquors, after a dividend of five per cent on the capital stock has been paid, are divided between the city and certain charitable associations. It will be seen that the two features
of this system especially prominent are the elimination of private
gain from liquor-selling and the destruction of the saloon's polit-
ical influence. With the elimination of private gain, all interest
in selling to drunkards, minors, or criminals, disappears, and this
must result in a reduction in drunkenness and crime. The saloon,
as a factor in politics, will also be destroyed, because no one could
hope to be retained as manager or employee in a saloon who used
his position as a means of advancing himself to political leader-
ship. The control of the saloon here, as in Sweden and Norway,
would be given to total abstainers or to temperance reformers.
The other advantages of this system are many. It reduces the
number of saloons and secures a strict enforcement of legal and
police regulation of the liquor traffic; it places the sale of liquor
in the hands of those who are interested in decreasing, rather than
increasing its consumption; it brings a large amount of money to
the public treasury, allowing a reduction in taxes to be made, and
gives a large sum to charitable institutions. This system will
certainly lessen the evils which are inseparably connected with
the saloon as now conducted. Prohibition has failed to solve the
liquor question, especially in large cities where reform is most
urgent. High license slightly lessens the evils, but fails to
accomplish the desired results. It is time to treat the problem on
new lines. The Gothenburg liquor system gives proper regula-
tion of the liquor traffic without destroying entirely the right to
use intoxicants, and it is adapted to American institutions.