

**The licensing laws and proposals for their amendment : (from "Meliora," April, 1869).**

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## THE LICENSING LAWS AND PROPOSALS FOR THEIR AMENDMENT.

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THERE are few subjects so intricate as our licensing system, if system it may be called. Enactment after enactment has been made, establishing such a variety of licences, that very few persons are acquainted with all the conditions under which the privilege to sell intoxicating drinks can be obtained, or with the laws which are in force for the regulation of the trade. There is only one thing in connection with the system on which all persons seem to be agreed, namely, that the result of all the laws has been most unsatisfactory. All classes of the community are loud in their complaints, and proposals for amendment are being brought forward on every hand. The magistrates all over the country and the judges of the highest courts, the convocation of the province of Canterbury and the conference of the Primitive Methodists, the members of the United Kingdom Alliance and of the Licensed Victuallers' Protection Societies, the Association for the Promotion of Social Science and the numerous associations scattered over all the land for the avowed object of amending the licensing laws, all declare unanimously that the present incongruous mass of inconsistent enactments produces confusion and uncertainty in the administration of the law, and promotes rather than diminishes intemperance and its attendant evils. We do not intend in the present article to enter upon a consideration of the amount of the evil which does exist among us; we will assume, unhesitatingly, that our readers are well aware of its extent and deplore it sincerely; we shall take for granted that all desire to remove what all regret; and believing that what is really needed is a fair statement of the law as it at present stands and of the remedies proposed, we shall attempt as impartially as possible to describe the existing confusion, and to point out the nature of the proposals made for its removal.

We do not dare to enter into a history of the licensing system of this country beyond the first quarter of the present century. Prior to 1830 the only licensed retailers of beer, wine,



and spirits held their privilege under the bill known as 9 Geo. IV., c. 61, the object of which, according to its preamble, was 'to reduce into one act the laws relating to the licensing by justices of the peace of persons keeping, or being about to keep, inns, alehouses, and victualling-houses to sell excisable liquors by retail, to be drunk or consumed on the premises.' This act repealed about twenty-one previous acts in force up to the year 1828, and has been ever since the statute under which the magistrates have granted certificates to the applicants who came before them, on which the Excise have been empowered to confer the privilege of selling intoxicating liquors. Every one is aware that under this act general licensing meetings are held annually, and at least four meetings for transferring licences every year. At these meetings 'any question touching the granting, withholding, or transferring any licence, or the fitness of the person applying for such licence, or of the house intended to be kept by such person, shall be determined by the majority of the justices present.' The persons receiving certificates from the magistrates at the brewster sessions can, on payment of the appointed fees, take out licences from the Excise for the sale of spirits and other excisable liquors. Some few take a beer licence only, though they may have the more extended privilege if they wish it. The licensed houses are allowed to be open for the sale of drinks except on certain hours on Sundays, Christmas Day, and Good Friday, or any day appointed for a public fast or thanksgiving day. By the 'Permissive Public House Closing Act of 1864,' which has been adopted in about eighty localities, all places for the sale of drink or refreshment are closed from one o'clock a.m. to four. Various penalties are also enacted for breaches of the conditions of the licence, such as permitting drunkenness or the assembling of disorderly characters, the use of any but standard measures, the adulteration of liquors, the sale of drink in prohibited hours, the permission of gambling, &c. For a first offence a penalty not exceeding five pounds is imposed; for a second offence a sum not exceeding ten pounds; for a third offence the fine is increased to a sum not exceeding fifty pounds; while, if the justices should in their discretion remit this charge to the general or quarter sessions to be tried before a jury, the penalty, on the accused being found guilty, is increased to one hundred pounds, and the licence may be adjudged to be void, and its holder incapable of selling excisable liquors by retail for three years from the time of such adjudication. It is under this act that all the places which retail spirits and wines for consumption on the premises



are licensed, except those kept by free vintners of London, who do not require a licence for the sale of wines.

The action of this law was considered so unsatisfactory, and so much intemperance prevailed in the country, that in the year 1830 the Beerhouses' Act was passed, by which, without having recourse to the justices, houses were licensed by the Excise for the sale of beer only, it being hoped that the introduction of facilities for obtaining a milder beverage would lessen the consumption of spirits, and that the removal of the licensing from the magistrates would diminish the partisanship and jobbery with which those gentlemen were charged. Before this act had been in force many years, the evils arising from it were so great, that it was so far amended that only houses of a certain rateable value are now permitted to receive licences, and in places with a population under 5,000 a certificate of six persons rated at £6 and upwards, as to the character of the applicant, is required. The holders of beer-house licences are under severer restrictions than licensed victuallers as to hours of sale, but the penalties upon breaches of the tenour of licences are the same as those imposed upon the spirit dealers, with the exception that the penalty for a first offence does not exceed £2, and that there is no clause like that which enables the magistrates to send the consideration of the third offence to quarter sessions, so that the fine is not to exceed £50, though the licence may be declared void both as to the man and the house for two years.

In addition to these two classes of houses for the sale of intoxicating beverages, refreshment-houses may now be licensed for the sale of wine to be consumed on the premises, and grocers, &c., may obtain licences to sell for consumption off the premises. There is no discretion granted to the bench as in the case of applicants for a spirit licence, but a veto power may be exercised if it be proved that the character is bad.

We have not, in our enumeration of the variety of licences existing, alluded as yet to the wholesale licences, nor do we intend to enter into their consideration except to point out that, under a late act, wholesale dealers may by a small additional fee obtain a retail licence for sale for consumption off the premises. This applies to the sale of beer as well as of spirits, and several cases are reported where under cover of this licence men have entered the trade who were unable to comply with the requirements of the ordinary Beer Act. To add to the complication, occasional licences can under certain circumstances be obtained for the sale of excisable liquors at fairs, races, &c.



We have thus briefly enumerated the different laws regulating the licensing of houses for the sale of all kinds of intoxicating drinks, without entering into any discussion of their relative merits. There is, however, one feature in the magisterial licence which ought not to be overlooked, as it adds very materially to the chaos which our want of system inevitably produces. The members of the bench have unlimited discretion as to their votes. They may grant or withhold a licence with or without reason. Political prejudice, a desire of exercising personal patronage, or gratifying a personal dislike, the highest philanthropy, or any other motive may actuate them. They may think it right to consider the requirements of the neighbourhood, or believe that such a consideration is not to be taken into account. They may flood a town with spirit shops, as the Liverpool bench did during several years, or may keep down the number or reduce it, as they have done in Manchester. By their action they may thus make the law have an altogether different operation in two neighbouring towns; they may change their plans from year to year, and thus produce an uncertainty as to the character of the law, and greatly injure the respect in which it is desirable that it should ever be held. And, further, as the applicant for a spirit licence has, if refused, the right of appeal to the quarter sessions, it may happen, indeed it has frequently happened, that a man who for very definite reasons has been refused his licence by the local justices, obtains it from the quarter sessions, the members of which cannot be equally good judges of the circumstances under which the application was made.

When we remember, in addition, that even if the ordinary brewster sessions refuse a spirit licence, and the quarter sessions confirm that refusal, a man can obtain a beerhouse licence and a wine licence, it is evident that the one great guarantee for the respectability of drinking-houses supposed to be in the good character of the licensee, is altogether done away with. It will, therefore, not be surprising that nearly every proposal for the amendment of the present law begins with a demand for a repeal of the Beer and Wine Licensing Acts, or, as it may be more generally stated, by a proposal that there should be one authority only from whom all the various kinds of licences should proceed, and that this authority should have power along with other circumstances to take the character of the applicants into consideration.

The Beerhouse Licensing System Amendment Association, of which Mr. Akroyd, the member for Halifax, is the treasurer, and the Rev. Wm. Stanyer, M.A., the hon. secretary, confines



itself to the moderate proposition of repealing a portion of the Beer Act, and has at the present moment a bill before Parliament to that effect. There can be no doubt that if the Beer Act were repealed so as to prevent for the future the granting of any new licences, or at least to diminish the number, some slight good would be obtained; but so very small a portion of the evil would be touched, that we cannot even at the best look upon this proposal with very great hopefulness of the ultimate benefit to be derived from it. The bill brought in by Mr. Selwyn-Ibbetson expressly provides for the renewal of all existing licences granted prior to its passing. A measure allowing the magistrates no power to take the wants or requirements of the neighbourhood into their consideration of licences for consumption off the premises, can hardly be considered one which will greatly improve the present system. The good features of the proposal are that less stringent proof is required of various contraventions of the conditions of licence than at present. The advantages are, however, so small in the proposed amendment, when the evils to be contended against are considered, that we cannot help fearing that the passing of the bill will be a hindrance instead of a gain to an efficient reform of the licensing system. We shall have men demanding a fair trial, as it is called, before any further change be made. Its advocates also confirm a very erroneous impression current among too many of the magistrates—that they have not as efficient a control over the conduct of beerhouses as over that of public-houses licensed by the magistracy. The fact is that the powers which the magistrates do possess are rarely exercised. If the penalties which might be imposed were enforced to the limit assigned to them by the law, we should see a diminution in the number of beerhouses, and the remainder would be conducted with greater desire to comply with the tenour of the licence. It is a very rare thing indeed to see a fine of £10 imposed upon a beerhouse-keeper for a second offence, or a £50 penalty imposed for a third offence. The report of the chief constable of Manchester records 668 cases of beerhouse-keepers convicted during the year ending September 29th, 1868, the total amount of fines imposed being £860. 10s., exclusive of costs, giving an average penalty of £1. 5s. 9d. to each case. There were, however, four cases of a fourth conviction, where the full penalty undoubtedly ought to have been imposed. This would have made £200. There are twenty-two cases of third convictions, which would have imposed penalties to the amount of £1,100. It is unnecessary to refer to the 110 cases of second offences in order to show that in Man-



chester, at least, the magistrates have not made use of the powers at present within their reach to ensure the good behaviour of the beerhouse-keepers; and we have every reason to believe that in this neglect Manchester is not worse than other towns. From the report of Lieutenant-General Cartwright, the inspector of the constabulary for the eastern and midland counties for the year ending 29th September, 1868, printed by order of the House of Commons, 19th February, 1869, we find that in those counties there were 8,656 beerhouses; that, against these, 940 prosecutions for offences against good order were conducted, resulting in 780 convictions; and yet only three licences were withdrawn. The tables do not give the number of times the houses proceeded against had offended, but we can hardly believe that only three were guilty for a third time. In 34 boroughs inspected by this gentleman there were 3,213 beerhouses, the number of prosecutions was 620, the convictions were 544, but not one single licence was withdrawn. Surely the law cannot have been enforced with anything like strictness here. There is, however, one point which ought not to be overlooked in considering this assertion of magisterial want of control. The fact that on a third offence the licence is void, would make the traders more careful if the bench were more severe. A publican is of course liable to lose his spirit licence on a third offence, but when he has forfeited it he can continue the sale of beer and wine under an Excise licence, but the beerhouse-keeper would have to find some other means of procuring a livelihood, if the law were rigorously enforced against him. We are told that the licensed victuallers' houses are so much more under magisterial control than the beerhouses, yet we do not find that their authority is exercised in a very formidable way. In the 17 counties reported upon by General Cartwright there are 13,978 public-houses; of these, 565 have been proceeded against, and 461 have been convicted; but only 37 have had their licences withdrawn. In the 34 boroughs on which he reports, there are 4,595 public-houses; against 303 proceedings have been taken, and 244 have been convicted, while only 6 have lost their licences. These figures do not suggest any very great strictness on the part of the justices of the peace. The leniency of the bench towards such offenders makes many persons very doubtful whether the magistrates are the fittest authority in which to confide the power of regulating licences.

A new society—'The National Association for Promoting Amendment in the Laws relating to the Liquor Traffic'—has lately been established under the presidency of the Arch-



bishop of York, which demands an immediate suspension of Excise licensing, and further asks for measures of restriction to limit the facilities of intemperance. This scheme, inasmuch as it immediately stops the multiplication of beer-houses, is an improvement upon the other society to which we have just referred, but it is impossible to say anything as to its practical usefulness, in consequence of the further restrictive measures which it desires to see enforced being as yet undeclared.

A more definite scheme was introduced into the House of Lords by the Earl of Lichfield. This measure, however well intended, would, if carried, be rather a means of stricter police supervision than an amendment of the licensing system. The chief features of reform which it proposed were, a change in the method of granting beer and wine licences, almost identical with that proposed by Mr. Selwyn-Ibbetson's bill, which would therefore continue the mischief of excessive temptations instead of materially lessening the number, and the granting to owners of property the right of objecting to, though not of vetoing, the issue of a licence within a certain radius of their property. Very many police regulations were, however, introduced into this bill which would have raised a host of objections, and some of them well founded ones. We do not see how, *e.g.*, the clause which prohibited working men from entering public-houses during the ordinary hours of labour could be defended against the charge of being class legislation. Lord Lichfield has, however, joined the society presided over by the Archbishop of York, and we therefore hope that, if he again introduces a Licensing Amendment Bill, it will be a more thoroughgoing scheme than the one which he last brought before the Peers.

A far more extensive proposal for reform is made by the Licence Amendment League, founded last October in Birmingham, which has its head-quarters, however, in Manchester, and has the advantage of possessing in Dr. Martin a most earnest and unwearied hon. secretary. We subjoin his statement of the objects of the league, together with the reform it suggests:

**FIRST.**—*The amendment of the Beer and Wine Licensing Acts.*

- a* Abolition of Excise licensing.
- b* Magistrates to form the sole licensing authority.
- c* No appeal from the decision of the local magistrates.

**SECOND.**—*Diminution of the present facilities for obtaining new licences.*

- a* By increase of rating and rental qualifications.
- b* By giving to owners and occupiers of adjacent property a local veto.
- c* By giving to town councils, &c., a general veto.



**THIRD.**—*Diminution of the present provocatives to drunkenness.*

- a* Sunday drinking.—Town councils, boards of commissioners, &c., to have the power of closing public-houses, &c., during the whole of Sunday.
- b* Early and late drinking.—Town councils, &c., to be empowered to order the closing of public-houses, &c., during the week, from 10 or 11 p.m. till 7 a.m.

(Where there is not a local board elected by the ratepayers, these powers to be exercised by the magistrates.)

**FOURTH.**—*To establish special checks to drunkenness.*

- a* By prohibiting the opening of gin-palaces.
- b* By prohibiting the opening of music or dancing saloons, except under magisterial licence.
- c* By rendering it an offence to allow workmen to remain drinking during ordinary working hours.
- d* A husband to have power to prohibit publicans, or others, from supplying his wife with liquor.
- e* Magistrates to have power to prohibit publicans, or others, from supplying notorious drunkards with liquor.

**FIFTH.**—*To give greater protection to young persons.*

- a* Publicans, or others, prohibited from supplying liquors to any young person under eighteen years of age in any licensed house.
- b* No female under the age of twenty-one years to be employed as a waitress in any licensed house.
- c* No person under twenty-one years of age to be allowed to enter any singing or dancing saloon connected with a public-house, &c.

No doubt if some of the amendments proposed by this association could be carried, they would very materially improve our present condition. We are, however, very far from convinced that the magistrates are the best licensing authority which could be found. The discretion entrusted to them has frequently been used very indiscreetly, and the fact that they are an irresponsible body of men makes the placing of so great a power in their hands so absolutely as it would be under these proposals, a matter deserving of very serious consideration. The plan of increasing the rental and rating qualifications of houses applying for new licences is a very excellent one, as it would limit the area in which the discretionary power of the licensing authority could be exercised, and by making the licensee invest more capital in his business, it would impose greater caution on the conduct of the publican, as the deprivation of his licence would be a proportionally greater loss. The local veto which is claimed for owners and occupiers of adjacent property is distinctly a step in the direction of a thorough remedy for the evils of the public-house system, and, as we shall try to show further on, a very legitimate means to be adopted. We are not quite so sure that giving to town councils, &c., a general veto is equally effective. No doubt this suggestion is derived in part from the Right Hon. John Bright's remark in the debate on the second



reading of the Permissive Bill in 1864, when he recommended the transfer of the licensing power to the municipal councils, and advocated entrusting the full veto power to the representatives of the ratepayers as preferable to putting it to the direct vote. Mr. Bright subsequently stated that he did not urge the proposal with much confidence, as the case was full of difficulties. We fear that municipal elections would be exposed to additional dangers of corruption if the Town Councils were to become the licensers of public-houses, or to have the power of veto. As it is, there are so many questions of local interest which have to be considered in the selection of men for municipal duties, that the important question of licensing might be overlooked by those interested in other subjects, while the persons interested in the trade in drink would always be alive to the importance of securing men favourable to their traffic, so that the indirect control first suggested by Mr. Bright, and adopted with modification by the Licence Amendment League, would be very far short of being so effective as its advocates would desire.

Several of the special checks suggested under the fourth and fifth heads would no doubt be very beneficial, but others are open to the objections which we urged against similar proposals in Lord Lichfield's act, and seem to raise unnecessary difficulties in the way of any practical scheme of licence amendment.

Several of the suggestions contained in the programme of this league were embodied in the bill which a few sessions ago was introduced into the House of Commons by the members for Liverpool. This bill was the result of an experiment which had been tried in that town for several years, by the rather singular interpretation given to the 9 Geo. IV., c. 61, by some of the most active members of the local magistracy. Believing that the intention of the Legislature had not been to consult what are technically known as 'the requirements of the neighbourhood,' licences had been granted to all applicants of good character who occupied houses suited to the trade in liquors. The number of spirit shops had thus been very greatly increased in Liverpool, so that while in most other towns the beerhouses exceeded the spirit shops in number, the proportion was there reversed. We do not wish to go into the often repeated tale of Liverpool drunkenness. Suffice it to say that the experiment was so fruitful of evil results, that although some of its defenders still maintain that it was not tried quite long enough, more moderate counsels prevailed at the brewster sessions, and the ordinary interpretation of the act was adopted after a severe and prolonged contest. The one fact, however, had become manifest to



all persons, that laws which permitted such evils to exist as were seen in Liverpool, required amendment, and a joint committee of the borough magistrates and town council prepared a bill which was introduced, as we stated above, by the local members, but, meeting with Government opposition, based on technical grounds, it was withdrawn, on an implied understanding that the ministry would take up and deal with the whole question as soon as possible. The Liverpool Licensing Bill, which the *Licensed Victuallers' Guardian* described as 'seeking the hateful condition of Liverpool all over the kingdom, and making unusual efforts to swamp the respectable tradesmen, to ruin their property, and lower them in the social scale, as [*sic*] to convert the whole country into a similar fearful Eblis of misery and crime,' would perhaps meet with more lenient criticism at the hands of less interested critics. Its chief objects were to secure uniformity in the issue of licences, combined with restrictions that should by degrees lessen the number of houses and at once diminish the hours during which the sale could be carried on. The advantages were to be obtained by the immediate repeal of the Excise licensing powers, and by making the magistrates the sole licensing authority. The varying manner of the exercise of their discretion was to be put an end to by making it obligatory upon the bench to grant licences whenever certain conditions were complied with by the applicants. In order that the number of houses might not under such a rule be too much increased, a high rental was demanded for every house seeking a licence, and a largely increased fee was required, a certain amount of which was to be paid to the authorities of the locality, in aid of police expenses. A local veto was proposed to be given, by which three-fourths of the inhabitants and owners of adjacent property would be able to prevent the issue of new licences. A small reduction in the licence fee was to be made to such publicans as would consent to keep their houses closed on Sundays, and various increased restrictions were to be imposed upon the dealer in intoxicating drinks. One clause in the bill was inserted to quieten the fears of the present holders of licences,—they were to have fourteen years' grace before the increased fees were to be demanded of them, but they were immediately to come under the police regulations imposed by the bill.

There can be no doubt that a system such as that sketched in the Liverpool bill would in very many places be a vast improvement upon the present chaos. The increased rating or rental demanded would amply counteract the evil caused by



giving up the moral check which exists in the discretionary power of the magistrates, and when the years of grace had passed there would be a large diminution of the number of houses, the small public-houses and beershops being then unable to obtain new licences. Whether it would be worth while to purchase the advantage, together with the lessened hours of sale and the increased strictness of regulation by an indemnity of fourteen years, is, however, very questionable ; and the veto clause was so small a boon as to be valuable chiefly as a concession of a principle which might ultimately lead to greater things. The bill was, however, withdrawn, and the promised Government bill is still only promised, the deputations which have lately waited upon Mr. Gladstone and the Home Secretary having only elicited the fact that no measure will be introduced by them this session, although the question is to be brought under the consideration of the cabinet. It does appear, however, from remarks made by Mr. Gladstone and by Mr. Bruce, that the provisions of the Liverpool bill will not be overlooked in framing any measure which will be brought forward with ministerial sanction.

The important question of licensing reform has not been overlooked by the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science. At every meeting which it has held since its first congress at Birmingham, papers have been read upon the subject, and resolutions have been frequently sent up to the council for further deliberation. At the Belfast meeting (1867) a special committee was appointed, which gave very mature consideration to the whole question, and presented a very thoughtful report to the council of the Association, which after considerable debate was adopted by that body. At the last congress in Birmingham (1868), the report was considered in the section for the Suppression of Crime, presided over by Sir Walter Crofton, and the council was requested to press its consideration upon the attention of Parliament. The suggestions of this committee, after asserting that uniformity was greatly needed in the laws regulating the sale of drink, which are in the opinion of the committee in a very unsatisfactory condition, proceed as follows :—

‘The manner in which houses are conducted where excisable liquors are sold by retail would appear naturally to depend on the character of the persons entrusted with the licences, the value of the premises in which the sale takes place, the hours during which they are open, and the number of such houses in a neighbourhood.

‘It is therefore desirable that every precaution should be taken to ascertain the character of all persons applying for licences, that the houses are of sufficient value, and proper for the business, and that there is a reasonable presumption that, if licensed, the occupants may, with industry and honest dealing, obtain a living.



'Your committee therefore recommend that all applications for licences to sell beer, spirits, wines, cider, or perry by retail be in the first instance made to the justices in petty sessions, after notice to the chief constable of the place and the other authorities now required by the 9 Geo. IV., c. 61, in respect of inns, alehouses, and victualling-houses; such notice to state the class of trade for which the applicant wishes to be licensed, *i.e.*, hotel, inn, victualling-house, wine and spirit store, refreshment-rooms, or beerhouse; and the discretion at present exercised by justices in granting licences, shall be extended to all licences to be granted by them.

'That the value of houses to which licences should in future be granted (otherwise than by renewal) for the sale of beer by retail to be drunk on the premises be increased to double the value now required by the 1 Wm. IV., c. 64.

'That all licensed houses be closed on Sundays, but to prevent inconvenience to the public, justices, where they see fit, may, in their licence, permit houses to be opened on Sundays from one o'clock to three o'clock, and from eight o'clock to ten o'clock, p.m.

'That in the cases of innkeepers' licences, and where justices consider that the house is *bonâ fide* and reasonably required as an inn for the entertainment of travellers, the justices may accompany the grant of a licence with a dispensation as to hours as to the whole or part of the house and premises, provided that such dispensation shall not apply to nor include any taproom, bar, or other place of public resort for drinking.

'That all applications for licences or renewals, or objections thereto, shall be heard in open court, and the witnesses, if necessary, may be examined on oath.

'That where application for a licence is made for the first time, if two-thirds of the owners or occupiers within five hundred yards object, the justices shall refuse the licence, provided that the clerk of the justices has received from the persons so objecting at least ten days' notice specifying the objection.

'That the right of appeal from the decision of the petty sessions be extended to persons objecting to licences being granted, and notice of appeal, to suspend the issue of the licences until after the decision of the sessions. The disqualification of justices under the 9 Geo. IV., c. 61, s. 27, to be repealed.

'That, with the view of preventing undue influence in the granting of licences, no clerk to justices shall be permitted to apply for, or support, or oppose, any application for a licence before the justices, under the penalty of forfeiture of his office of clerk.

'That when a person has had a licence granted him for new premises, and has within three years sold them for a premium, increase of rent, or other valuable consideration, he shall be disqualified from applying for or obtaining a licence for other premises in the same county, city, or place.

'That the justices' licence shall state the excise licence which the applicant shall be entitled to obtain from the Inland Revenue Office, according to the acts regulating their issue, the hours during which the house may be kept open, and if on Sundays, Good Fridays, and Christmas Day, and that in the penal portion of licences, as at present used (9 Geo. IV., c. 61, schedule C), there be added, after the words "or any gaming whatever therein," betting, raffling, or being agent for any prize fight or race.

'That three convictions within two years for any offence against the licensing acts, or for any misdemeanour, shall disqualify from grant of, or renewal of licence.

'That for disqualification the conviction need not be for the same kind of offence.

'That the landlord of licensed premises shall be entitled to decline to serve any person whom he may consider to be the worse for liquor, who is disorderly or quarrelsome, or uses any obscene, disgusting, or profane language, and may call in the aid of the police to remove such persons from the premises.'

These suggestions contain some very practical improvements. Like all the proposals we have been considering, they start with the idea of uniformity, the advantage of which all are agreed upon; they adopt from the Liverpool scheme the idea



of increasing the value of houses to be licensed for the sale of beer to double that now required, but they do not on that account require the magistrates to give up their discretion as to the requirements of the neighbourhood. They make the magistrates the only licensing authority, but do not abolish all distinctions between licences, enabling the bench to issue licences for the sale of beer only. They propose a veto, local only, it is true, and applying only to new licences, but they extend the radius in such a way as to make its operation more likely to be effective. Acknowledging the evils of the present appeal to quarter sessions being open only to the applicant for a licence, they propose to extend the right of appeal to persons objecting, and repeal the disqualification (9 Geo. IV., c. 61, s. 27), by which justices who have sat in brewster sessions are prevented from acting at quarter sessions. Licences granted under a measure based upon this report would be for six days of the week only; but, to prevent inconvenience, special licences might be granted when good reason was shown for such a course. These would be very great improvements upon the present unsatisfactory laws, and we sincerely hope that Government will not lose sight of these thoughtful and well-considered practical suggestions; not brought forward, be it remembered, by men whom society regards as prejudiced in favour of some pet scheme, but by those who for long years have devoted thought and practical work to magisterial duty, and to the executive work of reformatory institutions, and to the general amendment of the law.

One more scheme of amendment we would refer to with especial interest. The convocation of the province of Canterbury has had a committee sitting for several months 'to consider and report on the prevalence of intemperance, the evils which result therefrom, and the remedies which may be applied.' This committee consisted of men whose names will command the respect of all classes of society, as will be seen from the following list of its members:—The Deans of Canterbury, Chichester, Lichfield, Westminster; the Archdeacons of Coventry, Ely, Exeter, Leicester, Nottingham, Salop; Canons Argles, Carus, Gillett, Harvey, Oxenden, Wood, Dr. Fraser; Prebendaries Gibbs, Kemp. Archdeacon of Coventry chairman. It is not within the range of this article to discuss the many important facts elicited by the inquiries of this committee, nor to mention the interesting reflections to which its conclusions give rise. We are only concerned with that portion of the report which affects the amendment of the licensing system, and there we find the following proposals:—



'1. The repeal of the Beer Act of 1830, and the total suppression of beerhouses throughout the country.

'2. The closing of public houses on the Lord's Day, except for the accommodation of *bonâ fide* travellers.

'3. The earlier closing of public-houses on week-day evenings, in accordance with the practice, now on the increase, of early closing in all other businesses. More especially is this necessary on Saturday, when, it is well known, intemperance chiefly prevails.

'4. A great reduction in the number of public-houses throughout the kingdom, it being in evidence that the number already licensed far exceeds any real demand, and that in proportion as facilities for drinking are reduced, intemperance, with its manifold evils, is restrained.

'5. Placing the whole licensing system under one authority, and administering it on some uniform plan which would have for its object the abatement of existing temptations to tippling and intemperate habits.

'6. The rigid enforcement of the penalties now attached to drunkenness, both on the actual offenders, and on licensed persons who allow drunkenness to occur on their premises.

'7. Passing an act to prevent the same person holding a music, dancing, or billiard licence, in conjunction with a licence for the sale of intoxicating drinks.

'8. Prohibiting the use of public-houses as committee rooms at elections, and closing such houses on the days of nomination and election in every parliamentary borough.

'9. The appointment of a distinct class of police for the inspection of public-houses, and frequent visitation of public-houses for the detection of adulterations, to be followed, on conviction, by severe penalties.

'10. The repeal of all the duties on tea, coffee, chocolate, and sugar.

'11. Your Committee, in conclusion, are of opinion that as the ancient and avowed object of licensing the sale of intoxicating liquors is to supply a supposed public want, without detriment to the public welfare, a legal power of restraining the issue or renewal of licences should be placed in the hands of the persons most deeply interested and affected—namely, the inhabitants themselves—who are entitled to protection from the injurious consequences of the present system. Such a power would, in effect, secure to the districts, willing to exercise it, the advantages now enjoyed by the numerous parishes in the Province of Canterbury where, according to reports furnished to your committee, owing to the influence of the landowner, no sale of intoxicating liquors is licensed.'

Many of these suggestions have been brought forward in some of the schemes we have already reviewed; others we have not seen incorporated in any of them, although they have been discussed time after time, some in the House of Commons and others elsewhere. It is not so much the novelty of the reforms advocated as their source which renders them so important. When this report shall have been widely circulated, and the evidence on which it is based shall have been before the public, which will have had its attention directed to it by a debate in Convocation, we have no doubt but that its influence will be of the most telling nature. All persons interested in the social regeneration of our country owe an unspeakable debt of gratitude to the Archdeacon of Coventry, not only for the manliness with which he introduced so practical a question into an assembly not generally known as loving subjects so unexciting as the removal of intemperance, but still more for the indefatigable perseverance he has shown in pursuing the



investigations, and the skill only equalled by the energy he has manifested in bringing the inquiries of the committee to a successful issue. We trust he may be equally strengthened by the Holy Spirit in carrying the adoption of the report by convocation as he has been in the preparatory stages.

Although we have spent considerable time in discussing schemes of licensing amendment, we have not exhausted the list which lies before us as we write, and if we refrain from enumerating further plans, it is because in their main features they have been adopted in one or other of the schemes already named. We cannot, however, close our remarks upon this important subject without referring to one branch of it, which we deem most important. All the schemes that we have noticed proceed more or less upon the supposition that licensed houses for the sale of intoxicating drinks are needful, and most of them try by all possible means to limit the number of such houses, and their hours of opening, while placing the power to license in the hands of only one authority. But there are very many persons who regard the public-house licensed by any authority to sell drink of any kind, at any hours or under any circumstances, as productive of evil to the general well-being of society. Proceeding on the theory that in proportion to the facilities for obtaining drink will be the amount of drunkenness, they are unable to hope for sobriety so long as any places are open for the sale of intoxicating beverages, and they are therefore advocates of total prohibition. Experience having taught that laws which are not supported by public opinion are generally ineffective, the supporters of the suppression of the liquor traffic in the kingdom do not urge upon the Legislature to pass a measure like the Maine law, which should by imperial enactment stop the sale of drink, but have concentrated their efforts upon the agitation for what is generally known as 'The Permissive Prohibitory Liquor Bill,' which if passed into a law (and it is now before the House of Commons awaiting a second reading) would enable the inhabitants of any district to prohibit the sale within the limits of that district, whenever a majority of two-thirds should so determine. We do not mention this measure as an amendment of the licensing system, or as an alternative to be adopted instead of any of the schemes we have already been discussing. If any of them were adopted, it would still be applicable, for it does not in any way provide for licensing the sale; on the contrary, it only provides for its suppression. If the Legislature should think fit to give all power into the hands of the magistrates, as the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science proposes, or



should only give them such a limited power as the Liverpool bill and the measures of Mr. Selwyn-Ibbetson suggest, or should adopt Mr. Bright's scheme of making town councils the licensing authority; or if (as has been proposed) a special board should be elected for the purpose, the Permissive Bill would be a valuable addition to such a changed condition of things. At present the inhabitants of any place may appear in the licensing court with memorials against the granting of certificates, but they are only allowed to do so by the courtesy of the bench, and although they in reality are the very persons whose interests are most concerned in the proceedings of the day, their memorials may be ignored by the magistrates, and they have no appeal. Under the operation of the Permissive Bill their voice would become potent so soon as a preponderating majority were in favour of prohibition, but not before. The experience of the United States of America teaches that the Maine law is always effective for good whenever it is supported by public opinion; and so the Permissive Bill would never fail of good, because its veto would never be applied except under favourable circumstances. The sound of prohibition, no doubt, has a very startling effect upon English ears, and a very natural prejudice against it exists among us; yet, wherever in the United Kingdom the experiment has been made, it has always proved itself a great success. In Scotland, which has not the most exalted reputation for sobriety, the General Assembly of the Church had a committee in the year 1848 to inquire into the state of intemperance. Their report was adopted and approved by the Assembly in the year 1849. The committee had nearly forty reports from parishes that had no places within their bounds for the sale of liquor, and in these cases the people of the parishes were declared free from intemperance. But not only are they free from intemperance; we find in the account given of them remarks like the following: 'The parish pays £3 yearly for the Jedburgh Union Poor-house, but they have not a pauper in it.' 'Crime by the population unknown.' In a parish with 957 inhabitants, 'the poor-rate is 5d.; crime is unknown.' In the case of Dolphinton, in Lanarkshire, 'there is only one pauper on the roll and no assessment for the poor.' Such are the natural results of prohibition. In Ireland there is a district in the county of Tyrone of 61½ square miles, in which no public-house exists; here, too, poor rates have been diminished and a police station has been removed, as being no longer needed. No doubt there are many other parishes in Ireland which can show the same happy results. In England we can find more examples of prohibition than most



people would expect. Passing over the instance of Saltaire, and many other places known to be in the possession of landowners favourable to prohibition, we find that in the report of the committee of Convocation, referred to before in this article, there is this pleasing paragraph :—

‘ Few, it may be believed, are cognisant of the fact,—which has been elicited by the present inquiry,—that there are at this time within the province of Canterbury upwards of one thousand parishes in which there is neither public-house nor beer-shop; and where, in consequence of the absence of these inducements to crime and pauperism, according to the evidence before the committee, the intelligence, morality, and comfort of the people are such as the friends of temperance would have anticipated.’

Surely these facts should prevent any one from declaring prohibition to be impracticable amongst us. The Permissive Bill is now and then attacked in the most paradoxical manner. It is objected to because it is such a sweeping measure, and in the same breath we are told it would not prohibit the sale of beer outside the district which chose to enforce it, and dismal pictures are drawn of people taking journeys to obtain the means of indulgence. Surely we may rely upon the practical good sense of our countrymen so far, that if they see a neighbouring parish enjoying a happy immunity from poor rates, and from criminal excesses of every kind, they will soon adopt the simple remedy which has had such beneficent results, and prohibition will be extended over a gradually widening area. This gradual extension would meet the objections which are often raised as to the injury which a prohibitory enactment would inflict upon the revenue, and the wrong it would do to the vested interests of those engaged in the liquor traffic. Only by very small steps would the income which the State derives from the sale of drink decrease and while this source of taxation was lessened, the increased prosperity caused by a diminution of local taxation, and the liberation of capital for productive industry would soon reimburse the treasury. Those engaged in the traffic would have plenty of time given to them to draw out from their trade and to seek for more useful employment of their capital. Prosperity would advance *pari passu* with prohibition; we should soon find our manufacturing industry barely sufficient to supply the requirements that would be made upon it. Unburthened of the crushing weight of pauperism and crime which, hanging heavily upon us, impedes our progress, we should make such advances as would cast into the shade even the development of the last fifty years, and on a foundation of morality we should build up a structure of national prosperity



unrivalled in the long history of mankind. No scheme of licensing amendment can prove ultimately satisfactory unless it is accompanied by this simple plan of Sir Wilfrid Lawson's Permissive Prohibitory Liquor Bill.

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## STATISTICAL DATA FOR SOCIAL REFORMERS.

### I. GROWTH OF THE LIQUOR TRAFFIC SINCE 1830.

IN 1828 a General Licensing Act was passed with the hope on the part of its promoters that it would form a new and life-long settlement of all the questions connected with the licensing system. That hope was quickly and grievously dissipated. Two years more saw the introduction and passing of the Beer Bill, which upset the traditional licensing routine of three centuries, so far as the sale of malt liquors was concerned. Henceforward any person might become a beerseller without the consent of the district magisterial bench. The predicted results were a purer article, greater sobriety, and a death-blow dealt at the brewers' monopoly: the actual results were even greater adulteration, wider intemperance, and the aggrandisement of the brewing interest beyond all precedent or imagination. What the effect has been in the development of the liquor traffic in England and Wales, is a subject worthy of attention. Within three months of the passing of the Beer Bill, 24,342 licences were taken out. In 1831 the number increased to 31,937; in 1832 it sank to 30,917; in 1833 it rose to 33,451; and in the year ending September 30th, 1867 (the last return), it stood at 49,725, having increased to that point from 47,670 in 1866. Before the Beer Bill became law its passing was violently deprecated by the licensed victuallers, who feared that it would ruin them by taking from them that margin of their profits which enabled them to keep open, but they miscalculated the effects of competition in alcoholic drinks; for the spirit licences, which in 1828 were 48,435, became 48,904 in 1830; in 1831 they were 49,749; in 1832 they were 50,225; and in 1833 they had reached 50,828. The licensed victuallers in 1831 are given at 50,547; in 1832 at 50,796; and in 1833 at 52,611; the difference

between these figures and those as to spirit licences, probably having regard to licensed victuallers who confined themselves to the sale of beer under a magistrates' certificate; but taking either the spirit licences or licensed victuallers, the only conclusion possible is, that the beerhouse did not supersede the spirit-shop, but that so far as its influence was felt by the licensed victualling interest, it was of a stimulating and fostering character. The census was taken in 1831, and the population of England and Wales found to be 13,896,797; and as the number of beer licences had increased from 50,903 in 1829 to 83,332 in 1831, it is clear that while in 1829 there was one beer licence to 270 persons, in 1831 there was one beer licence to 167 persons. Coming now down to 1867, we find that in the year ending September 30th, the licensed victuallers were returned at 68,395, and the beersellers at 49,725, a total of 118,120, showing an increase of 16,248 licensed victuallers since 1831, and of 17,788 beersellers, a total increase of 34,036 liquor sellers of these two classes. The population of England and Wales in 1861 was 20,066,224, which may be reckoned at 21,500,000 in 1867. This gives one publican to 314 persons, and 180 persons to every beer licence, including all such licences held by publicans or beersellers. The natural inference from these premises would be that in proportion to population the liquor retailers had diminished since 1831. This inference, though arithmetically correct, if confined to publicans and beersellers, would be egregiously delusive if taken as evidence that the influence of the drink trade is less marked now than in 1831, taking population into account; for there are upwards of 2,000 refreshment houses where wine is sold by retail for consumption on the premises, and thousands of wholesale and retail sellers in wine



and spirits for consumption off the premises. The Wine Licences Bill of Mr. Gladstone in 1860 gave a stimulus to the trade in vinous compounds, which, but for the spread and counter-active operation of temperance principles, would have been as fatal to public sobriety as the Beer Act of 1830. It must always be remembered, likewise, in instituting a comparison between the liquor traffic at one period and another, that a gross omission will be made if regard is not had to the comparative size and splendour of the places where intoxicating liquors are sold; and if this very important element is incorporated into the present consideration, the moral balance will have to be struck against the drinking-houses of to-day. Beer-shops may not have much altered in appearance, but gin palaces, public-houses in general, and music and dancing saloons, all testify but too plainly that the *descensus Averni* has been made brighter and broader with the increase of national wealth and the development of business enterprise in all the departments of national commerce and exchange. The temptation-power and seductiveness of public drinking customs have thus been mightily and wonderfully augmented, to such a degree as more than makes up for any relative diminution in the number of licences to sell intoxicating drinks.

## II. CONSUMPTION AND COST OF INTOXICATING LIQUOR IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 1868.

The accounts of trade and navigation, which issue monthly from the Board of Trade, usually appear about a month after the date to which they refer. This delay has been much complained of, and the complaints will be louder than ever, as the returns for the month of last December, and for the twelve months ending December, 1868, were not published till the 1st of March. Mr. Bright will be asked to look into this acknowledged abuse of the public patience, previous examples of which have been defended on the score of necessary precautions against errors of entry affecting the reported commerce of the year. We can only attempt to summarise those particulars which relate to the manufacture, importation, and consumption of alcoholic liquors in 1868. Taking, first of all, the article of ardent spirits, the following table

will show the facts concerning the spirits manufactured in the United Kingdom:—

### USED AS BEVERAGE ONLY.

	Gals.
England.....	11,327,223
Scotland.....	4,907,701
Ireland .....	4,773,710
United Kingdom .....	21,008,634

The gross quantity used in 1867 was 21,199,376 gallons, and in 1866 it was 22,217,390. Between 1867 and 1868 the difference is slight, and comparing the three items it appears that in England the consumption in 1868 exceeded that of 1867 by 3,570 gallons, Scotland showing a decrease of 75,308, and Ireland of 118,944 gallons, being a nett decrease of 190,742 gallons in the United Kingdom. The quantity of spirits charged with duty in 1868 was 22,045,014 gallons, but of this 703,565 gallons were warehoused on drawback for exportation, &c., and 332,815 were methylated spirits, leaving, as before stated, 21,008,634 for consumption within the United Kingdom.

The ardent spirits imported for use in 1868 were—rum, 3,950,636 gallons; brandy, 3,320,573 gallons; and (not enumerated but computing by the duty) 1,133,310 gallons of Geneva and other sorts; a total of 8,404,519 gallons: a less quantity than in 1867, and about the same as in 1866.

Adding together the British and imported spirits, the aggregate for 1868 was 29,413,153 gallons. On the British spirits the Government duty was £10,504,317, and on the imported spirits £4,333,371, a total of £14,837,688. The cost to the consumers, the people of the United Kingdom, may be calculated on a basis of 20s. per gallon for home spirits, and 22s. per gallon for imported spirits; this estimate covering the cost of production, duty, and manufacturers' and retailers' profits, and the result will then be—

Cost of British spirits .....	£21,008,634
Cost of imported spirits ...	9,244,971
	<hr/>
	£30,253,605

With regard to malt, the quantities retained for consumption in 1868 for beer were, in England, 43,163,971 bushels; in Scotland, 2,167,189 bushels; in Ireland, 2,787,873 bushels; a total



of 48,119,033 bushels. In 1867 the corresponding total was 46,310,357 bushels, and in 1866 it was 50,217,828 bushels. Besides the quantity charged duty for beer, there were made in 1868, free of duty, for distillation, 4,549,813 bushels of malt, 243 bushels for feeding cattle, and 1,668,737 bushels for exportation as beer and in drawback—an aggregate manufacture of malt to the extent of 54,337,826 bushels. Looking now at the quantity used for beer-making, and calculating that two bushels of malt produced one barrel of beer (the Excise estimate), we have a manufacture of 24,059,516 barrels of beer from malt: and to this must be added the beer produced from 351,742 cwt. of sugar, *i.e.*, 844,180, a great total of 24,903,696 barrels, which, retailed at 48s. per barrel (allowing for retailers' multiplication of 36 gallons into 48 by dilution), cost the purchasers £59,768,870.

The quantity of wine entered for consumption in 1868 was 15,151,741 gallons, compared with 13,752,428 in 1867, and 13,326,929 in 1866. The customs' duties were £1,521,199; and estimating the average retailers' price to have been 15s. a gallon, the purchasers' outlay on this amount of wine was £11,363,805.

Now, causing these various lines of figures to converge, we have, as the outcome of these inquiries, the following summarised facts presented to us:—

Consumed in 1868—	
Of ardent spirits,	Sold for
29,413,153 gallons,	£30,253,605
Of beer and ale,	
24,903,696 barrels,	59,768,870
Of wine,	
15,151,761 gallons,	11,363,805
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An aggregate expenditure	
of.....	£101,386,280
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In this stupendous outlay, nothing is allowed for the sums expended in the purchase of cider, perry, and the numerous sorts of British wines which imitate the names and the worst properties of their foreign kindred. If the accuracy of the figures as above presented is unimpeachable, it remains for the patriot, the moralist, the philanthropist, and the Christian to ponder the question, whether the British people have done right or wrong in expending upwards of a hundred millions sterling in 1868 upon the drinks which issue from the distillery, the brewery, and the wine-vat.

### A MAGISTRATE'S TESTIMONY.

**A**T the SALFORD HUNDRED QUARTER SESSIONS, in the Manchester Assize Courts, April 12th, 1869, Alfred Milne, Esq., presiding,

Mr. E. ASHWORTH (Egerton Hall), in moving the adoption of the report of the visiting justices, and certain formal resolutions arising out of it, said he might take that opportunity of referring to the deputation to Her Majesty's Government, which was authorised by the court at the October sessions, last year, on the subject of beerhouse licences. The interview took place on the 9th March, and it was, personally considered, satisfactory; but it was by no means satisfactory as holding out a hope of their seeing during the coming year any correction of the evil of which they complained. The response which was made to the proceedings of the Lancashire magistrates was very general throughout the country; and there joined the deputation representatives of upwards of twenty counties and a large number of influential boroughs, such as Birmingham, Liverpool, and Leeds. The matter was in this position: the drinking propensities of the country were stronger than its religious and moral propensities—(hear, hear);—consequently, the political influence brought to bear upon the subject outweighed



the moral, and the Government could not, so long as they felt that they had not the support which was requisite, be induced to take it in hand. The magistrates must fight on, very much as they were doing. \* \* \* \* \*

He was at a loss to know, as a member of the Salford District Finance Committee, in what respect it was possible to lessen expenditure without checking primarily the drinking habits of the people, and their attendant evils, imprisonment and lunacy. (Hear, hear.) Nine-tenths of the prisoners in the County Gaol could trace their fall, directly or indirectly, to the use of strong drink. With regard to lunatics, they had not the means of analysing as closely as in the case of prisoners the cause of confinement; but his experience as a visiting justice for many years past led him to believe that drink had very much to do with it. They had a new prison which had cost £150,000. Within eighteen years the county had spent £400,000 upon asylums; and it was not the first cost only which was to be considered. The annual cost of the maintenance of lunatics was upwards of £100,000; and the number under confinement was constantly increasing, more from the cause which he had pointed out, namely, drunkenness, than from any natural cause. In the three county asylums at Lancaster, Rainhill, and Prestwich there were now 2,840 inmates, and beyond the accommodation there afforded there were 160 in private asylums, at Haydock and other places. The cost of all these amounted to more than £100,000 a year, beyond that of the Lancaster asylum, which accommodated 680 inmates in 1851. He did not attribute the rapid increase of lunacy, of course, exclusively to drunkenness. There were other causes. About one-half of the accommodation at Rainhill was occupied by persons—a large proportion of them from Ireland—who were brought over to Liverpool, and there turned adrift, until they were taken to the workhouse, and from thence to the lunatic asylum. Some legal action ought to be taken in order to send them back to their homes. There were in the Rainhill asylum, which contained 671 inmates, 321 English (considerably less than one-half); the rest consisted of Irish, 296; Scotch, 14; Welsh, 12; German, 6; and other foreigners or natives of the Isle of Man, 10; so that, in fact, Lancashire maintained an asylum, which cost upon its erection £118,000, besides furniture, a very large proportion of the accommodation afforded by which was taken up by strangers, who were found wandering about the streets of Liverpool, and each of whom cost the ratepayers £32 a year. When all this was regarded as the result, as in his opinion it was, of drunkenness, the public could not urge too strongly upon Government the propriety of taking steps to check the facilities to drunkenness. His remarks must not be taken as applying to the labouring classes, but to that lower stratum who were not labourers, but idlers and mere parasites upon the community. He was not a temperance lecturer, nor a teetotaler; he was discussing the question merely from a magisterial and economical point of view. If the expenditure of the county was to be checked at all, they should go to the root of the evil, rather than complain of high rates, which were caused by punishing those who had become victims of their own folly. (Hear, hear.)

The CHAIRMAN said the Court ought to feel obliged to Mr. Ashworth for having taken so much trouble in that most important matter. *The drinking system was undoubtedly the question of the day.* He was sorry to hear that the deputation made so little impression upon the Government. That was generally the result of talking to ministers. (Hear, hear.)



## A STATESMAN'S DUTY.

IT would not be too much to say, that if all drinking of fermented liquors could be done away, crime of every kind would fall to a fourth of its present amount, and the whole tone of moral feeling in the lower orders might be indefinitely raised. Not only does this vice produce all kinds of wanton mischief, but it also has a negative effect of great importance. It is the mightiest of all the forces that clog the progress of good. It is in vain that every engine is set to work that philanthropy can devise, when those whom we seek to benefit are habitually tampering with their faculties of Reason and Will—soaking their brains with beer or inflaming them with ardent spirits. The struggle of the School, the Library, and the Church, all united against the Beer-house and the Gin-palace, is but one development of the war between heaven and hell. It is, in short, intoxication that fills our gaols—it is intoxication that fills our lunatic asylums—and it is intoxication that fills our workhouses with poor. Were it not for this one cause, pauperism would be nearly extinguished in England. Looking, then, at the manifold and frightful evils that spring from drunkenness, we think we were justified in saying that it is the most dreadful of all the ills that afflict the British Isles. We are convinced that if a statesman who heartily wished to do the utmost possible good to his country were thoughtfully to inquire which of the topics of the day deserved the most intense force of his attention, the true reply—the reply which would be exacted by full deliberation—would be, that he should study the means by which this worst of plagues can be stayed. The intellectual, the moral, and the religious welfare of our people, their material comforts, their domestic happiness, are all involved. The question is, whether millions of our countrymen shall be helped to become happier and wiser—whether pauperism, lunacy, disease, and crime shall be diminished—whether multitudes of men, women, and children shall be aided to escape from utter ruin of body and soul? Surely such a question as this, enclosing within its limits consequences so momentous, ought to be weighed with earnest thought by all our patriots. But what we would throw out for consideration is the question, whether it should not be allowed, that when five-sixths of the ratepayers of a parish demand the entire extinction of all the places for the sale of fermented liquors, their prayer should be granted, and all licences then existing should expire, after a fair time had been allowed for the publicans to make other arrangements.—*“How to stop Drunkenness,” by Charles Buxton, Esq., M.P.*