

courages. Our clergy, our magistrates, our intelligent laymen, should consult together, both in private and in public, to devise means for lessening this great evil. Public opinion once fairly aroused, would have immense power; and united action, on the part of all who are alive to their duty, could scarcely fail to be followed by the Divine blessing. We would wish our readers to communicate any facts or suggestions that bear on this important subject, that some plan may be devised and heartily carried out, to abate or remove entirely this fatal moral pestilence that is desolating the domestic comforts, and preying on the vitals of our working population.—*Bristol Temperance Herald*.

Prohibitory Law.

The opponents of the Maine Law offer but two arguments. They say the law *cannot* be enforced, and the attempts to enforce it only enhances the evil it is intended to cure; and that it *should not* be enforced, because it violates personal liberty. To the first the reply is overwhelming—that it *has* been enforced to some extent, and that, just so far as it has been, crime and poverty have decreased. Vague and general contradictions of this statement are plentiful enough, but to no purpose. Wherever the Prohibitory Law has been enforced even incompletely, the statistics of Crime uniformly show a diminution in the use of intoxicating drinks. This great statistical fact is not fortuitous, nor of doubtful cause. It is not to be silenced by contradiction. Figures must be met by figures. If this *could* have been done, it *would* have been. What if, at any time since Maine has had on her statutebook the law that has given her fame throughout Christendom, her jails had held as many criminals as before, and her courts as full of poor, wretched mortals answering for outrages on person and property as before—would not the Rum interest have verified the fact by accurate figures, and used it triumphantly to stay the plague which is smiting its profits? Here that interest is lame. The figures are against it—tremendously against it, like the hand-writing on Belshazzar's palace-wall. The trade is partially cut off in Maine, and Crime is cut off almost if not quite in the same proportion. The undeniable figures showed this in six months, and continue to show it.

Now, intelligent and ingenious trafficker, wholesale or retail, in Alcoholic drinks, you must find some cause for this glorious fact beside the prohibition of your business, or else confess yourself the author of Crime and the enemy of Society. It won't do for you to say, even if you could prove it, "The quantity is as great as ever." The object of the law is not to prevent people from drinking this or that, but to prevent Pauperism and Crime—to protect the public peace. If the statistics of Pauperism and Crime are in favor of the Law, let the amount drank be what it will, if drinking be not diminished, then, surely, nobody's liberty to drink has been much damaged. We don't care *how* the law brings about the blessing, so that we get it; and we do get it, more or less, wherever we get the Law. Wherever the law has been enacted, and had a trial, there it has been more or less enforced, and always with a visible, palpable diminution of Pauperism and Crime, of immense pecuniary and incalculable moral value. This is as much an accomplished fact in politics of the world as Steam Navigation or Railway Locomotion is in the Mechanics of it.

Thus, the Rum Advocates, having signally failed in their matter-of-fact argument and utilitarian Logic, have no stronghold left but the abstraction of personal liberty. That sound principle, they tell us, must not be violated, no matter how powerful the motive, or how great the good to be secured by its violation. It is refreshing to meet with such devotion to principle; but, unfortunately, the great good which is to be sacrificed to it, in this case, is not that of the devotees, but of other people. The principle may be worthy of all this worship; but we cannot help remarking that their wor-

ship of it is none of the purest. Their godliness smells terribly of gain. Now, let us see whether Society must submit to a double or quadruple load of Pauperism and Crime, rather than to invade the traffic which is the cause of it.

It is not contended that Alcoholic Beverages are necessities of life. They are at best luxuries. It does not follow that, because the law has laid its prohibitory finger on a luxury, it has established a precedent for invading the necessities of life, nor for invading other luxuries which have no injurious effect on Society, or are not productive of Pauperism and Crime. But the law in this case does not prohibit the use of the luxury; it only prohibits the public production and distribution. The personal right to poison oneself—whatever that is worth—is left as intact and sacred as ever, in the abstract; and, as we are talking of an abstraction, this is significant. The whole extent of the invasion of personal right or liberty is this, that one man shall not be allowed to minister to the luxury of others, whenever by so doing he injures Society at large both in means and morals. In this general statement we recognize a principle of law as old as Society itself, if not as old as the everlasting hills. Personal liberty apart from it would be worthless. It invades no man's privacy more than any other law; it simply prohibits a public branch of business which sacrifices public-good to private gain in the enterprise of pampering an abnormal appetite. The Maine Law occupies no untrodden ground. No landmark of liberty is overthrown to make way for it. Laws on the same principle have existed wherever Civilization has flourished. The only peculiarity in this case is the extent of the practice prohibited, and the proportionally urgent demand.

If the legislative power has no right to enact such a law, then what right has it to meddle with Pauperism and Crime at all? Is Society limited to the cure of these evils, and precluded from prevention? Then it might as well give up the hopeless enterprise first as last—let the unfortunate and incompetent feed and clothe themselves as they can, and the rogues run at large to satiate themselves with villainy. Personal liberty just as much requires the overthrow of all laws which prevent the mercenary from seducing and victimizing the weak and unwary, as the Maine Law. If we yield the opponents of the Maine Law their "sacred principle," we must establish the unrestricted right of tempting and being tempted, as the arch-enemy would have it; and, that being done, what revenue would long suffice for grated palaces, and the expensive and tedious processes by which "justice" fills them? Common sense proclaims, like the voice of the infinite multitude of waters, that Society has a divine right to relieve itself, and *slough off* this whole business of swilling the human mind into fatuity by poisonous drink. Individual right against social power depends upon the nature of the thing to be done—the balance of the good and the evil there is in it. Now, in this age of the world, as in none before, Alcoholic Beverages have undergone the scrutiny of science. The Psychologist, the Chemist, and the Physiologist, have traced the subtle spirit through all the nerves and fibres of the human frame, and noted nothing to compensate its inevitable mischiefs. The Political Economist and Statistician have watched the effect of this business on wealth, and found it every way destructive. The Theologist has weighed its results upon the soul, and found nothing but immeasurable woe. The good and the joy of it is like the momentary flash of the exploding magazine, which scatters black wreck and mangled corpses in all directions.

Now, here is established a marked, broad, eternal distinction between this traffic and the ordinary traffics by which the tributaries to human necessity and comfort are distributed. The danger that the prohibition of this will lead to the invasion of the others is fictitious and ridiculously absurd. The immunity of the old dead past must not be dug up against the salutary prohibition. By the same token that