

"laws, directed against the vice of avarice, increased usury, and raised the "interest of money;" and he might have added: The Gin Act of 1736, by placing upon spirits a prohibitive duty, superadded to the vice of drunkenness, the atrocities of the smuggler, and raised up a class of desperadoes, whose recklessness and debauchery contaminated all those with whom they came in contact.

The whole tendency of such legislation has been to nurture a disrespect for law which beginning with certain specific laws gradually extends to law in general, wherever law is opposed to self-interest.

Vicious practices can only be uprooted and overcome by what Dr. Chalmers designated as "the expulsive power of a new affection."

The fundamental error of all those who support prohibitory legislation is that of failing to distinguish between crime and vice. The one threatens the right of others, and is properly amenable to human law; the other is an inward moral distemper in respect of which its subject is accountable only to his own conscience and to his God. Vice may by indulgence therein bring forth crime, but until some overt act has brought the vicious man within the criminal ranks, human law can rightly take no cognizance of him.

But there is a power vested in society, beside which human law is the veriest pigmy, *i.e.*, the power of an enlightened and Christianized public opinion, under the influence of which the lewdness and inebriety of the last century have abated to an extent which then would have been deemed miraculous.

To this influence for the past forty years Temperance advocates have mainly appealed; and with wondrous success!

Mr. John Bright—said in addressing the House of Commons in 1864—
"There are some members of this House older than I am, but I am old enough to remember when among those classes with which we are more familiar than with working people, drunkenness was ten or twenty times more common than it is at present. I have been in this House twenty years, and during that time I have often partaken of the hospitality of various members of the House, and I may assert that during the whole of those twenty years, I have no recollection of having seen one single person at any gentleman's table who has been in the condition which would be at all fairly described by saying that he was drunk. And I may say more, that I do not recollect more than two or three occasions during that time in which I have observed, by the thickness of utterance, rapidity of talking, or perhaps a somewhat recklessness of conversation, that any gentleman had taken so much as to impair his judgment. That is not the state of things which prevailed in this country fifty or sixty years ago. We know, therefore, as respects this class of persons, who can always obtain as much of these pernicious articles as they desire to have, because price to them is no object, that temperance has made great way; and if it were possible now to make all classes in this country as temperate as those of whom I have just spoken, we should be amongst the very soberest nations of the earth."