

something for the increase of population, but that is but a small matter. If, however, you consult the very greatest of our authorities upon matters connected with crime, they will tell you that, of all statistics, those relating to drunkenness must be accepted with most caution. Those statistics bring before us, in fact, rather the extent to which the law against drunkenness is enforced, than the increase or decrease of the vice itself. When the public conscience is sensitive, the magistrates, and the police acting under their orders, are very strict. When public attention is turned to other matters, the magistrates and the police, sharing the tendencies of the public itself, become more lax. Now, the five years over which these statistics carry us were years of the keenest interest in the subject of temperance. In 1870 a Licensing Act was talked of as one of the next big things the Liberal Government had to do. In 1871 such a measure for diminishing drunkenness occupied much of the attention of Parliament. In 1872 as strong a measure was passed as the gigantic force of the adverse interests would permit; an Act which, as you know, cost the Liberal party which supported it a great many seats—a fact which will be long remembered by the neat answer which some one made to the question, "What was it that overthrew the late Government?"—"Beer and Fear," just as the unholy alliance for the same purpose between the Church of England and the licensed victuallers will be remembered by the witty saying of a carrier in Surrey—"The parsons and publicans have let in the sinners." If you will remember the statistics which I have just quoted, you will see that in 1873 there were thirty thousand more convictions for drunkenness than there were the year before. How was that? It was partly because the magistrates were exceptionally full of the subject, but, chiefly, because a more stringent law obliged the publicans instead of allowing drunkards to sleep away their drunkenness in the public-houses, to turn these people out into the streets at eleven o'clock so that they fell still drunk into the hands of the police. As between 1873 and 1874 there was only an increase in the latter year of three thousand in the convictions for drunkenness, a tenth part, be it observed, of what there was between 1872 and 1873. But, however it may be with the first two clauses of the proposition, there can no doubt with respect to the third, that drunkenness should be diminished, and there is a great deal of hurtful drinking which does not amount to drunkenness which should be diminished also. Now, how can this best be done? Drunkenness and excessive drinking are crimes against society, and society has not only the right but the duty, and not only the duty but the power, immensely to diminish them by legislative and quasi-legislative action.