

praying that no change may be made in the law has also been referred to the Committee. It bears eighty-seven signatures, comprising mercantile houses and others of the highest respectability, whose opinions, as far as individual intelligence and probity extend, are entitled to respectful consideration. The authority of these opinions is lessened by the consideration of the bias inseparable from personal interest which many of the petitioners have in the subject; and the natural prejudices unavoidably engendered by long familiarity with a traffic, assailed on moral principles, after the sanction of ages had given it an universal prevalence.

This petition is chiefly composed of strong assertions of the impracticability of enforcing a prohibitory law; these considerations are involved in the general question, and nothing is offered to elucidate the argument beyond the expression of opinion. We dissent from the assertion that the withholding of license has tended rather to increase than diminish the evil complained of. The contrary we believe to be the fact; although it is doubtless true that in some villages and peculiar localities illegal retail traffic has prevailed—occasioned in a great measure, we believe, by the imperfection of the law or of its administration.

The questions that arise on these several petitions, are—

1. The occasion for so strong a measure as legal prohibition.
2. The legitimacy of such a measure.
3. Its practicability.

To these questions this House in effect demanded our reply when it referred to us these petitions; and in performance of the duty thus imposed, we present the following opinions and reasons: