

that in their opinion the drinking of any quantity of wine, cider, beer, or any intoxicating liquor as a beverage, is in all cases a sin. If they are right, then the sale of liquor, to be used as a beverage, is in all cases a sin. And if it is a sin in all cases to sell, then such sales should be absolutely prohibited, and every offender should be punished. But however conscientious these witnesses, and those who agree with them, may be in asserting this, the distinguished representatives of the remonstrants distinctly assured the Committee, that that was not their opinion, nor as they believed that of the mass of the supporters of the present law. The law therefore does not, in the opinion of any considerable number of its friends, rest upon the proposition that the use of intoxicating liquors, as beverages, is in all cases, and of itself, sinful.

Much medical and chemical testimony was introduced upon both sides in regard to the dietetic uses of alcohol. Whether alcohol acts simply as a stimulant, or whether, in addition, it acts as food to the system, was discussed at great length, and with much learning. So long as scientific men differ widely upon this subject, the Committee would not presume to express an opinion; nor is it necessary for the purposes of this enquiry. For whether the alcohol in wine, ale, beer, cider, and other liquors, acts simply as a stimulant, in the language of Dr. Carpenter, "increasing, for a time, the vital activity of the body, but being followed by a corresponding depression of power, which is the more prolonged and severe in proportion as the previous excitement has been greater;" or whether, as stated by Dr. Edward H. Clarke, it "may produce the effect of food in the system, under certain circumstances," by arresting the disintegration of the tissue. In either case it is very certain that from the earliest times to the present day, in every country, civilized and uncivilized, men universally have used alcoholic beverages to gratify a natural appetite, and meet a real or supposed need of the system; and nature has surrounded us everywhere with the materials from which these beverages can be prepared, by the simplest processes of distillation or fermentation. It is probable that scientific men will always differ in their opinions as to whether these beverages are beneficial or injurious. But if this is true it can be yet more certainly said, that each individual will always claim that he is the best judge, and is entitled to decide as to his particular need of them, and as to their effect upon himself. Some men may decide wrongly; some men may use alcoholic liquors excessively against their own better judgment; still they, and all other men will, so long as it is conceded that the use is not, in all cases, sinful, assert the right to decide whether, and to what extent, they shall make it for themselves.

\* \* \* \* \* Now, the prohibitory law does not, in its terms, directly undertake to forbid the citizen from exercising this right. It is no offence to buy liquors for use as a beverage; it is no offence to use them as a beverage; no penalty is imposed upon either. Yet the prohibition of the sale is made only because the purchase and the use, as a beverage, it is thought, should be prohibited. Suppose now that the law should, in direct terms, also prohibit the buying and the use, under