

note the concluding observations of the writer, and would remark that over-zealous and unscrupulous city councils are not confined to the United States.

LEGAL RESTRAINTS ON EXTRAVAGANCE.—All interference with the liberty of the subject is repugnant to the spirit of British jurisprudence. Our law has declared contracts in restraint of trade or in restraint of marriage to be void, and, though in bygone days the press-gang coerced young men to serve in the navy, we refuse, in this age of toleration and advanced ideas, to follow the example of continental nations by introducing conscription. In fact, the ordinary British citizen practically enjoys perfect freedom of action as long as he is of sound mind, and not guilty of any crime. Whether it is desirable to allow individuals to do whatever they like, subject to these restrictions, is a question on which even the wisest men may differ. Freedom may be a "noble thing," as the old poet Barbour has expressed it in his poem "The Bruce," and the adage that "a man can do what he likes with his own" may commend itself to the great mass of English-speaking people; but, after all, the law should protect the weak, the incompetent, and the helpless from descending headlong to ruin through folly, inexperience, or sheer absence of will power. The careers of "the Jubilee Plunger" and of the late Mr. "Abington" Baird show that prodigals are not likely to make a good use of unlimited liberty. It is easy to talk about "sowing wild oats," but many persons are unhappily engaged all their lives in that barren kind of husbandry. When a man leaves no record behind him but that he spent nearly a million in betting, drinking, and harlotry, we may well ask, would it not have been better if the law had prevented him from recklessly squandering money in vicious pursuits?

In other words, why should there be no legal restraints on extravagance? At present our law interferes in no way with spendthrifts. Suicide, and even the attempt to commit suicide, is dealt with criminally; but the reckless misuse of money is not restrained by any civil or criminal process. Many cases of moral suicide have occurred through the evil use of wealth; and still we cling to the fallacy that liberty is a good thing, even for the confirmed prodigal.