

had been spreading over the country. At any rate, the march of improvement cannot be stayed because temporary encroachments are likely to be made on some men's private gains. A sectional hue and cry has been raised against every social advance that has been made in the past. Not a canal has ever been dug, nor a railroad built, without interfering with local interests somewhere, or without having it said that somebody was going to be ruined. The introduction of every new piece of machinery has been opposed, sometimes with riotous mobs, on the ground that it would bring financial destruction on some ill-fated class. I can remember when it was said that Liverpool and Bristol would be ruined if the slave-trade were broken up. We all know the outcry that was made at Ephesus, of "injustice and robbery" if silver shrines were no longer needed for the great goddess, Diana. A similar outcry against prohibition will not occasion any very great degree of alarm. Boswell, in his *Life of Dr. Johnson*, speaking of the *slave-trade*, says,—“The wild and dangerous attempt which has for some time been persisted in, to obtain an Act of our Legislature to abolish *so very important and necessary a branch of commercial interest*, must have been crushed at once had not the insignificance of the zealots who took the lead in it made the vast body of planters, merchants and others reasonably enough suppose that there could be no danger. * * * * To abolish a status which in all ages God has sanctioned and man has confirmed, would be a robbery to an innumerable class of our fellow-subjects.” But no one was frightened. The cry of “robbery,” “ruin to commercial interests,” and “flagrant injustice,” passed unheeded. “The wild and dangerous attempt” of “insignificant zealots” to obtain a prohibitory law against slavery succeeded; the country went on prospering more and more, and the names of those “who took the lead” in the movement will be carried down to posterity as the benefactors of their race. Transfer the above quotation from the *slave-trade* to the *liquor-traffic*, and you have the precise position of those who urge the objection I am considering against a prohibitory law—a position the absurdity of which will be as universally apparent a few years hence as that of poor Boswell is now. Prohibition may involve serious inconvenience to a certain class; but the loss to the grog-seller will be an inestimable gain to the entire community, and “partial evil will be universal good.”

I have carefully read the late debates in the Ontario Parliament on this subject, and was forcibly struck with the fact that so few were willing to peril their reputation by saying a good word for the traffic. Another equally impressive fact was, that those who undertook it made out so poorly. I can remember but two points urged on this side, at all worthy of notice. One was in substance—*We ought not to interfere with a man's right to eat and drink what he pleases*. It ought to be distinctly understood that we have no wish to infringe upon any one's liberty as to eating and drinking. Let me try to illustrate this. Suppose an ox or a sheep is dying of disease, and the owner kills it and brings the meat into market. A town officer steps up saying, “the law prohibits the sale of this article.” But there happens to be one standing by who is jealous of his own and others' privileges—one who is determined that “Britons never shall be slaves.” He turns round and defiantly asks, “do you mean to interfere with the rights of freemen? Cannot any one eat unsound meat who pleases?” The officer replies, “certainly he can; but that is not the question. This man, by exposing for sale what is injurious to health, has rendered the article liable to confiscation and destruction, and himself to a heavy fine. That is the law, and a very good one it is, necessary for the protection of society.” So the object of the law we want is not the