

of view, very great stress is laid by the advocates of prohibition, both in the House and out of it, on the assumption that it is a necessary consequence of our religious teachings. But those who take that position are either unscriptural or illogical. In order to justify the right of the majority to impose their will upon the minority in matters of this kind, the advocates of prohibition are compelled to put upon the Scriptures an interpretation which they have never borne, and never can be shown to bear, and that is, that the use of intoxicating liquors is in itself immoral. They are obliged to abandon what is the scriptural teaching that drunkenness is a deadly sin; otherwise they can find in Scripture no logical basis for their argument. Let us now proceed to deal with the question from the economical point of view. The advocates of the present proposition lay stress upon the statement frequently made by authorities whom we are all bound to regard with great respect—a statement which has become an accepted axiom, with, I think, very little foundation—namely, that to the use of intoxicating liquor is due nine-tenths or nineteen-twentieths or some other very large proportion of crime. That statement has been repeated by judges and other men of authority on various occasions, on the bench, in the press, and elsewhere, until it has become accepted as true. I am not prepared to accept it as true. If any one will consider what the nature of crime is, he will find there are very few classes of crime to which intoxication is an incitement, and that there are many classes in which intoxication would render the criminal incompetent and incapable of carrying out his criminal design. Let hon. gentlemen consult their own experience: let them look at those in their own rank of life or elsewhere, who have unfortunately given way to indulgence in intoxicating liquor, and then say whether the great majority of those men are criminals? Their own observation and experience will show such a statement to be utterly unfounded. If intoxication be the source of crime, how is it that those nations in which it unfortunately prevails the most are not the most criminal? This is a historical fact which the advocates of prohibition have not ventured to meet. Let them compare the northern countries of Europe, where intoxication most largely prevails, with the southern countries where intoxication is almost unknown. I venture to say the criminal annals are strongly in favour of the former. Let them meet that historical fact, if they can, before pressing their legislation on the ground that intoxication is the parent of crime. Again, their theory is altogether at variance with the teachings upon which they profess to base their case. I do not know that we are taught anywhere in those teachings that intoxication is the source of crime. We are told to look elsewhere and not to intoxicating liquor. If it were true that intoxicating liquors are the source of crime or of the greater portion of crime, we would find that doctrine laid down somewhere in the authority to which we all bow. But we find that opinion nowhere expressed, and that contention is, therefore, altogether unfounded. It is easy to rake up cases in support of a contention and apply them so as to fit the argument. I will give one which happened to my own knowledge. A respectable farmer, who had hitherto borne a fairly good character, was found guilty of killing his wife

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under most brutal circumstances. He was intoxicated, or partially intoxicated, but not so much as not to know perfectly what he was doing, when he committed the act. That was proved by the evidence, but it was also proved that he had planned the murder in his sober senses for weeks before, and had simply fortified himself with whiskey to bring himself up to the striking point. To say that murder was chargeable to intoxication is absurd. There was another case to which I might refer. A man committed a forgery. If there is a crime which requires a man to have all his wits about him, it is that of forgery. Well, what was the excuse of the criminal? It was that he was intoxicated. This plea has been so often abused that it has really come to pass that when a criminal comes to judgment he tries to escape moral responsibility by throwing the whole blame on intoxicating liquor. That doctrine, promulgated as it is by judge after judge, has been productive of very mischievous results. It is contrary to our own individual experience; it is contrary to history; and contrary also to the teachings of the Bible; and although it has become to be an accepted maxim, those who use it ought to carefully look into the evidence before they can regard it as applicable. But assuming, for the sake of argument, that all which is charged against intemperance can be fairly laid to its account, that all this crime, mischief and imbecility which is said to be the result of intoxicants can fairly be attributed to it, we are then to treat this question, not from the religious point of view, upon which, I say, the supporters of this resolution have no ground to stand, but simply as a question of economy, simply as to whether this remedy which is proposed is the one which will best meet the case. It is very hard to get evidence on this point. If we look at the experience of the States of the American Union which have adopted prohibitory legislation, we find the evidence so contradictory that I myself, after endeavouring honestly to discover what the result of that legislation has been, have to confess that I am unable to do so. I could quote page after page from various documents proving that the prohibitory liquor law in force in Maine and elsewhere has been productive of the most beneficial results, and I could quote page after page to prove that not only has it not been attended with beneficial results, but that it has been productive of a great amount of injury and misery. We cannot have a better example than the working of the Scott Act in this country. In the County of Simcoe, in which I live, the Scott Act was carried by an enormous majority, showing that the people there were in favour of that system. What was the result? For a few weeks—perhaps for a few months—the law was enforced, and the men who wanted liquor could not get it; but, after a very short time, places came to be known where liquor could be found. The Scott Act did not prevent the man who wanted to get drunk from getting drunk; it did not prevent the man who had a craving for liquor from getting liquor. The only result was that sober men who thought themselves respectable and did not like to be seen going into such places, did not get the liquor or got it at home, but the man who was desirous of getting intoxicated, the men of the very class whom the Act should have benefited, got the liquor just the same. Then there were prosecutions. Men were