

ters of wonder. But perhaps never, until the present age, has this principle been made the motto of a great action of philanthropy; never before did thousands unite together for the moral benefit of their fellow-men by means of an express abridgement of their own liberty of indulgence. And, after all that has been pointed out as distinguishing this remarkable period, perhaps nothing is more worthy of being regarded as its distinction, in a moral point of view, than this:—that multitudes have abandoned,—not for a time, but for life,—a customary, innocent, moderate, gratification—which did them personally no harm, and apparently threatened them no harm,—on the single ground that others abused it to harm,—that “this liberty of theirs was a stumbling block to the weak.” In this way, an attempt has been made to begin the removal of a great mass of crime and wretchedness; the removal of which once seemed so hopeless, that the boldest enthusiast hardly dared to dream of it; which had so entrenched itself in the passions of men, in their habits, in their laws, in their interests, that it laughed defiance on all opposition. Against that evil this principle of disinterestedness has been brought to bear, and the evil has begun to give way. An illustrious exemplification of the strength there is in Christian affection; and the appeal to the nobler impulses of human nature.

The words cited express the principle on which this action has proceeded, and are at once its authority and justification. The unhappy class of sinners by intemperate excess had become alarmingly large. It seemed as if there were no hope of retrieving the lost, or of checking the progress of others to the same ruin. But it would not do to let the plague rage without an effort to stay it.