

Indian witnesses, including most of those who came forward in defense of the opium revenue, decidedly condemned. Even the Majority Report admits that it is generally regarded in India as a disreputable habit. They also urge the need for an improved system of selling the drug in India, one of them proposing to put it into the hands of medical practitioners instead of the "ignorant opium farmers or venders under the present system," and the other adding the suggestions that, as under British law at home, it "should be sold in bottles or vials labeled 'poison,'" and that "the minimum dose which is likely to be fatal should be legibly printed in the vernacular on these labels."

Mr. Henry J. Wilson, M.P., presented a Minute of Dissent remarkable for its conciseness and brevity, on the one hand, and, on the other, for its impartial reference to and quotation of evidence on both sides. In these latter respects it forms a striking and suggestive contrast to the Majority Report, which, tho three times as long, does not contain anything like as many references, and does not give one solitary quotation from the anti-opium witnesses except in a few cases where they have made admissions that can be turned against them. Mr. Wilson entirely endorses the anti-opium program; he shows that the cultivation of opium is to a great extent unpopular, because unprofitable, among the cultivators; that it is principally produced for export to China; that "opium in China is a gigantic national evil;" and that "it is altogether unworthy for a great dependency of the British Empire to be thus engaged in a traffic which produces such widespread misery and disaster." As regards the sale of opium in British India, he makes recommendations similar to those of the two Indian commissioners.

The report of the commission was discussed in the House of Commons three weeks after its presentation, on the last evening of the session of 1895 which was available for other than Government business. The fact that the House had had so short a time in which to master the voluminous documents laid before it was made the most of by the Secretary of State for India, Sir Henry Fowler. But he made no answer whatever to the grave charges formulated by Sir Joseph Pease and his able seconder, Mr. John Ellis, against the Indian Government and the majority of the commission for a series of unprecedented and unconstitutional proceedings calculated gravely to prejudice the inquiry. Tho defeated by a large majority on what was virtually a vote of censure of the commission, the anti-opium leaders have good reason to congratulate themselves on having embraced what has proved to be the only opportunity which they could have had, while their own political party was still in power, to repudiate the authority of the report.

The debate cannot be said to have produced much effect on public opinion; and it was quickly overshadowed by the fall of the Liberal Government shortly afterward. The new Conservative ministry can hardly be expected to be more friendly than its predecessor to the anti-opium agitation.