

THERE is a limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence; and to find that limit, and maintain it against encroachment, is as indispensable to a good condition of human affairs as protection against political despotism.

“There are in our own day gross usurpations upon the liberty of private life actually practiced, and still greater ones threatened with some expectation of success, and opinions propounded which assert an unlimited right in the public, not only to prohibit by law everything which it thinks wrong, to prohibit a number of things which it admits to be innocent. Under the name of preventing intemperance, the people of one English colony, and of nearly half the United States, have been interdicted by law from making any use whatever of fermented drinks, except for medical purposes; for prohibition of their sale is in fact as it is intended to be, prohibition of their use.”

“There are questions relating to interference with trade which are essentially questions of liberty; such as the Maine law. * * * These interferences are objectionable, not as infringements on the liberty of the producer or seller, but on that of the buyer.”

“The acts of an individual may be hurtful to others, or wanting in due consideration for their welfare, without going to the length of violating any of their constituted rights. The offender may then be justly punished by opinion, though not by law.” * * *

“The individual is not accountable to society for his actions, in so far as these concern the interests of no person but himself. Advice, instruction, persuasion, and avoidance by other people if thought necessary by them for their own good, are the only measures by which society can justifiably express its dislike or disapprobation of his conduct. * * *

“For such actions as are prejudicial to the interests of others the individual is accountable, and may be subjected either to social or legal punishment, if society is of opinion that the one or the other is requisite for its protection.”

JOHN STUART MILL.