recourse to the same mischievous potion; thus consuming their health, and ruining their families, in hideous receptacles of the most filthy vice, resounding with riot, execration, and blasphemy."

"That all this," says another historian, "may have happened is probable enough; what alone is of much importance is the extent to which such corruption of manners prevailed among the lower orders, or the progress the habit of intemperance was making throughout that portion of the social body. If, however gross, it was confined to the very lowest grade of the populace, their conduct, like that of the drunken Helots among the Spartans, might be more likely to disgust than to seduce the rest of the community. However, this was not the general feeling at the time; the cry of all the more zealous and busy philanthropists was that the poison of Gin-drinking was eating into the very vitals of society, and that no measures could be too strong to take against an evil which, if its progress was not arrested, would speedily leave us nothing but the mere dead and putrid carcass of a once great nation."†

It was under the excitement of these alarms, which, it may be fairly assumed, somewhat exaggerated the danger, that the legislature was called upon to act; and nothing would satisfy them but

*Hogarth's celebrated print of Gin Lane painfully depicts the horrors of that gin-drinking period.

† Knight's Pictorial History, Vol. IV., p. 851.
an almost total prohibition of all Compound Spirits which were the most palatable and constantly most used, as well as most abused by the lower orders. This produced the Act of 2nd of George II., c. 17., by which a duty of five shillings per gallon over and above all other duties was laid on all Compound Spirits, and every retail of Spirits was obliged to have a license and to pay £20 yearly for the same. This was really a total prohibition of retailing such Spirits in an open and fair manner, but many continued to do so privately, and the law was evaded by making a plain sort of Spirit without flavor, called in derision Parliament Brandy, so that the excesses in spirituous liquors continued as general amongst the lower orders as ever, and without any advantage to the revenue. The law being thus found ineffectual, and the farmers complaining of the loss of a market for their inferior grain, a new and violent turn in the contrary direction was given to the spirit of the legislature, and in the sixth year of the same reign the former act was repealed, without making any regulation for preventing the excessive use of such liquors. This, of course, produced a bad effect; the poor being restored to the liberty of getting drunk as usual, like men set free from jail, made a most extravagant use of that liberty; and this revived in the legislature a spirit more violent than ever
against the use of every sort of spirituous liquors, British or foreign.

On the 20th of February, 1736, a petition from the magistracy of the county of Middlesex was presented to the House of Commons, setting forth—

"That the drinking of Geneva, and other distilled spirituous liquors, had for some years past greatly increased, especially among the people of inferior birth; and that the constant and excessive use thereof had already destroyed thousands of His Majesty's subjects, and rendered great numbers of others unfit for useful labour and service, debauching at the same time their morals, and driving them into all manner of vice and wickedness; and that that pernicious liquor was then sold not only by the distillers and Geneva shops, but by many other persons of inferior grades, by which means journeymen, apprentices, and servants were drawn in to taste, and by degress to like, approve, and immoderately to drink thereof; and that the petitioners apprehended the public welfare and safety, as well as the trade of the nation, would be greatly affected by it; and therefore praying that the House would take the premises into their serious consideration, and apply such remedy as the House should judge most proper."

Shortly after, in a committee of the whole House, Sir Joseph Jekyll moved a series of resolutions declaring, in substance, that the low price of Gin
was the principal inducement to the excessive and pernicious use of it, and that the sale of that and other spirituous liquors ought both to be discouraged by a heavy duty, and restricted to persons keeping public brandy-shops, victualling-houses, coffee-houses, and ale-houses, to innholders, and to such apothecaries and surgeons as should make use of the same by way of medicine only. These resolutions were agreed to without debate, but when, on the 8th of March, Jekyll moved in a Committee of Supply that there should be laid upon all spirituous liquors sold by retail the prohibitory duty of 20s. per gallon, the proposition encountered some resistance. Mr. Pulteney urged, among other things, that the business of distilling had been carried on in this country by royal authority for nearly a hundred years, and had been much encouraged by various acts of parliament passed since the Revolution; that even the retail of Spirits had been hitherto so much encouraged, or at least connived at, that there was not now an inn, an ale-house, or a coffee-house in the United Kingdom, but what owed a great part of its profits to the retail of such liquors: that with respect to Rum at least, there never had been any complaint of the excessive use of that liquor among the lower classes of the people; that the sugar colonies are now chiefly supported by the sale of their Rum; that Brandy and Rum were more
coveted by the common people, and might easily be made more palatable than any sort of home-made Spirit, and therefore the non-consumption of these liquors in any excess appeared to be completely insured merely by the existing duties upon them, which were higher, though far from prohibitory. Mr. Pulteney then alluded to a recent act which had imposed certain high duties upon Gin also, but which had been repealed.

"It cannot be said, Sir," he proceeded, "that nothing but a total prohibition can be an effectual remedy against the evil complained of, because we all know that the late act against Geneva was effectual so far as it went; it was made, unknown, to extend only to Compound Spirits; and with respect to them it was an effectual remedy, for it put an entire stop to the constant and excessive use of such Spirits amongst those of inferior rank; but some of the distillers immediately began to make a sort of Plain Spirit, which, I believe, in derision of the act, they called Parliament Brandy, and this the common people made as constant and excessive a use of as they had before done of Compound Spirits; this was the cause of the act; and if it had been amended and made to extend to all home-made Spirits, instead of being repealed, there would never have been occasion for any such complaint as that we have now before us."

Neither Pulteney's speech, nor the silent but per-
fectly understood dislike of the minister himself, Sir Robert Walpole, to the extravagance of the proposition, prevented Jekyll's resolution from being agreed to by the House, or from being followed up by another, recommending that the sum of £50 yearly should be paid for a license by every person keeping a public brandy-shop, a public Victualling-house, coffee-house, or ale-house, or being an innholder, who should sell any spirituous liquors.

A bill was accordingly brought in founded upon these resolutions; and, notwithstanding the opposition made to it, principally by the West India interest, eventually passed into a law. As a model bill for the modern Total Prohibition of the Liquor Traffic Society, we give its preamble and substance—

"Whereas the excessive drinking of spirituous liquors by the common people, tends not only to the destruction of their health and the debauching of their morals, but to the public ruin;

"For remedy thereof—

"Be it enacted that from September 29th no person shall presume by themselves, or any other employed by them, to sell or retail any Brandy, Rum, Arrack, Usquebaugh, Geneva, Aqua Vitæ, or any other distilled spirituous liquors, mixed or unmixed, in any less quantity than two gallons, without first taking out a license for that purpose within ten days at least before they sell or retail the same; for which they
shall pay down £50, to be renewed ten days before the year expires, paying the like sum, and in case of neglect to forfeit £100, such licenses to be taken out within the limits of the penny post, at the chief office of Excise, London, and at the next office of Excise for the country. And be it enacted that for all such spirituous liquors as any retailers shall be possessed of, on or after September 29th, 1736, there shall be paid a duty of 20s. per gallon, and so in proportion for a greater or lesser quantity above all other duties charged on the same.

"The collecting the rates by this act imposed, to be under the management of the commissioners and officers of Excise by all the excise laws now in force (except otherwise provided by this act), and all monies arising by the said duties or licenses for sale thereof, shall be paid into the receipt of His Majesty's exchequer distinctly from other branches of the public revenue; one moiety of the fines, penalties, and forfeitures to be paid to His Majesty and successors, the other to the person who shall inform on one for the same."

Archdeacon Coxe has printed the following curious letter from Sir Robert Walpole to his brother Horace, written on the 30th September, the day after the new law came into operation, which, as a lively picture of the state of public feeling, and of the general civilization of the time, well deserves to be transcribed:—
"Dear Brother,—I have forborne troubling you with the various surmises and apprehensions which of late, at different times, have filled the town with different fears and expectations concerning the first and immediate consequences that might attend the commencement of the Gin Act, because it was difficult at sometimes to form any probable opinion of what might happen; and at other times, and especially lately, it appeared a great deal more reasonable that there would not be any trouble or disorder at all, until about the middle of last week. I then began to receive again accounts from all quarters of the town, that the Jacobites were busy and industrious in endeavouring to stir up the common people and make an advantage of the universal clamour that prevailed among the populace at the approaching expiration of this darling vice. The scheme that was laid was, for all the distillers that were able to give away gratis, to all that should ask for it, as much Gin and strong waters as they should desire, and the great distillers were to supply all the retailers and small shops with as much as they should want to be distributed and given away in like manner. The shops were to begin to be opened on Tuesday evening, the eve of Michaelmas-day, and to be continued and repeated on Wednesday night, that the mob being made thus drunk, might be prepared and ready to commit any sort of mischief; and, in order to this, anonymous letters were sent to the distillers and town retailers in all parts of the town to instruct them and incite them to rise and join their friends, and do as their neigh-
bours did. Four of these letters have fallen into my hands, which the persons to whom they were directed discovered and brought to us: and by the excise officers that go round the town, I am informed that letters to the same purpose were dropped and directed to most of the distillers in all quarters. Those we have seen differ very little from each other in the tenor and substance; and the strong criminal expressious are in all the same, only transposed. In such as were less formal and not so laboured, the word was given Sir Robert and Sir Joseph.

"Upon the information the Queen was pleased to give such orders to the guards as you will have had an account of, which have had the designed effect, and in the opinion of all mankind, are thought to have prevented the greatest mischief and disorders that have of late been known or heard of—at least we have the satisfaction to have our measures universally applauded. I must beg leave to say there has been infinite care taken to observe and watch all their motions for above a month past; and upon the turn that the Spitalfields riots took, I think I may affirm that the whole spirit was at once dashed and seemed to be totally laid aside; but, upon the contrary, success at Edinborough (the allusion is to the Porteous affair), the fire kindled anew, and nothing less than such vigorous measures could have prevented the evil, which I hope now is put an end to. But the murmuring and complaints of the common people for want of Gin, and the great sufferings, and the loss of the dealers in spirituous liquors in general, have created.
such uneasiness, that they will deserve a great deal of
tention and consideration. And I am not without my
apprehensions that a non-observance of the law in
some may create great trouble; and a sullen acquiescence
and present submission in others, in hopes of gaining
redress by parliament, may lay the foundation of very
riotous and mobbish applications when we next meet.
[He adds, under the date of the following day, Oct. 1st,]
Last night is likewise passed over in perfect quiet,
although the patrols in the streets were taken off."

It will interest the reader to peruse from the
magazines and papers of the day, the poetical and
other effusions promoted by this attempted cure
for intemperance by act of parliament. The fol-
lowing is from the "Gentleman's Magazine," of June,
1736, headed—

"THE DOWNFALL OF MOTHER GIN."

"Mr. Danvers,

"The ministerial advocates have made themselves
very merry with the approaching fate of good Mother
Gin, whom they are pleased to represent as a patriot
and a Jacobite, though I always apprehended her to be
in the interests of the other side. She came over to
England with King William at the Revolution, and
hath received great encouragement from the govern-
ment ever since; and though it must be confessed she
hath been a great offender, and that some course ought
to be taken with her, yet I am not for having her
knocked on the head without any trial, or so much as being heard in her own defence. The charge against her is, that being an evil spirit, and dealing with the devil, she hath such power over the minds and bodies of the common people, that she can put them upon the most desperate attempts, and hath almost destroyed the present race already by her pernicious influence.

"This is a terrible accusation, indeed, and I am afraid partly just, but still I cannot help thinking that if 500 wise men were to lay their heads together some method might be found to prevent her doing mischief without coming to downright extremities. There is something particularly hard in her case at this time, when witches and conjurers have met with so much indulgence, and why should one sort of evil spirits be favoured more than another? She hath had the common fate of people under misfortunes, not only to be deserted, but even to be most violently opposed by those who lie under the strongest obligations to her,—I mean the gentlemen of the army, though the author of her life asserts to the contrary. I appeal to the officers themselves, whether the glorious victories of the last war were not, in a great measure, owing to her assistance, and whether they think it possible to go through another without it . . . . . If the good old lady does now and then carry off a man or two she makes them ample amends in the article of recruiting . . . . But supposing Mother Gin to be as vile a creature as her worst enemies have represented her, why should innocent people suffer on her account? Why must
our good friend Mons. Nantz, our countryman Mr. Rum, and that moderate lady Mrs. Punch, with all the collateral branches of that numerous family, be included in the same sentence? In answer to this it is said that Mother Gin is so nearly related to all those good folk, that it was absolutely necessary to destroy them in order to get at her. Great intercession was made for Mr. Rum and Madame Punch, it being alleged in their behalf that our sugar colonies, and several other branches of our trade, depended very much upon Rum, but to this it is answered in the same high tone that neither our trade nor our colonies did the nation half so much good as Mother Gin did it mischief, and therefore whatever may be the consequence she must be destroyed. We are told as a further justification of such proceedings, that the total destruction of Mother Gin will prove of great service to that worthy gentleman Sir John Barley Corn, but I am afraid that it will likewise be for the interests of Mr. French and Mr. Port, who have already gained so much footing amongst us.

"I must not conclude without observing that our brethren and fellow-subjects of North Britain are so far from being frightened out of their wits at Mother Gin's popularity, that they have obtained a license for her to continue in their country free and unmolested as heretofore. Whether they or we have acted with the most prudence will be seen in a short time.

"I am, Sir, your humble Servant,

"A MODERATE MAN."
In this year also appeared the following poem in the same magazine—

ON THE GIN ACT.

Pensilibus fusis, cyatho comitata supremo,  
Terribili fremitu stridula mæret anus.  
O longum, formosa, vale mihi vita decusque,  
Fida comes mensœ, fida comesque tori!  
Eheu! quam longo tecum consumerer œvo!  
Heu! quam tristitiae dulce lenimen eras,  
Æternum direpta mihi! sed quid moror istic?  
Stat: fiscum est: nequeunt jam revocare preces.  
I, quoniam sic fata vocant: liceat mihi tantum  
Vivere, te vivâ, te moriente mori.

TRANSLATION.

She grasped the glass, her spindle drooped and fell  
While thus the croaking beldame said farewell.  
“Farewell, my life, my love, my only cheer,  
At board and eke at bed companion dear.  
How fond the dreams of many years with thee!  
In sorrow’s hour how did’st thou solace me,  
O! now for ever lost! yet why complain?  
A tax what prayers can e’er repeal again?  
Go! the Fates call thee! Grant it, heaven, to me,  
'To live with thy life and to die with thee!”
From the "Carmina Quadragesimalia," published at Oxford, in 1723; the thesis is:

"An vita consistat in Calore? Appr."

Dum tremula hyberno Dipsas superimminet igni,
   Et dextra cyathum sustinet ore tubum,
Alternis vicibus fumos hauritque, bibitque:
   Quam dat arundo sitim, grata Geneva levat.
Languenti hic ingens stomacho est fultura, nei alvus
   Nunc Hypocondriacus flatibus aegra tumet:
Liberior fluit in tepido nunc corpore sanguis:
   Nunc nova vis membris, et novus inde Calor.
Si quando audieris vetulam hane perisse: Geneva
   Dicas ampullam non renovasse suam.

This copy of verses was contributed by Saulsbury Cade, elected from Westminster to Ch. Ch. in 1714. Oxoniensis.

Which may be thus translated:

"Does Life consist in Heat? Affirmative."

As Joan sits trembling o'er the winter's blaze,
   Her hand a cup supports, her mouth a reed;
One slakes the thirst the other tends to raise,
   Joan now the Gin consults and now the weed.
To fainting stomachs what a blest resource!
   No more with hypochondriac pangs to swell!
In her warm veins Joan feels the life-blood course,
   And a fresh heat and strength her limbs impel.
If e'er you hear that thirsty Joan "is not,"
'Twill be because she ceased to fill the pot.

And the following we take from the "Gentleman's Magazine," of October, 1737:—

ADDRESS TO GENEVA.

Hail, Mighty Gin! my breast inflame;
Oh, warm, raise, spirit me to fame;
Point my strong verse, my vein make merry,
I sing thy praise, rich, powerful berry;
Tho' Virgil's muse thy plant degrades,
And noxious makes its quiet shades,
Kind British swains and nymphs prefer
Thy influence, friendly juniper.

Oft the grave dame to visit thee,
Full softly turns the closet key.
Fond of retirement—books—mere notion,
Thy cagg directs her frequent motion;
Most favourite author on her shelf,
Safe placed from each rude-handling elf,
Save when the page or prying maid,
By treach'rous pick-lock are conveyed;
Or minx grimalkin scamp'ring o'er,
Rolls thee loud-tumbling to the floor.
The starchest prude deigns thee admission,
Free from dread censure or suspicion.
Thy flask, by trusty Johnny brought her,
Seems to the sight, pure pyrmont water,
Gin to pained entrails gives relief,
Makes slighted damsels love their grief,
Helps puffs to utter, rakes to rattle,
Old wives to scold, and young to tattle;
The wedded pair, whom strife perplexes,
Unites: tried friend to both the sexes;
Our rest in calms, in fortune's shouts
Our fence, our oracle in doubts.
Once thou wert these—such lately own'd;
But ah! Queen Gin is since dethron'd.
She who was wont the helm to guide,
Is now the lighter all beside.
She, who upheld by brave distillers,
Long potent stood 'gainst weak ill Villers,
A nation's force has leagu'd to slaughter;
(So strong she was, though simple water!)
O'er pow'r'd she by these numerous files is,
Mourn sad Rag-Fair; mourn Broad Street, Giles's.
When twain gilt pots of ample size,
On twain tall posts allure the eyes,
Or dangle pendant at the door,
Like god Silenus' can of yore,
Behold! jilts, incubuses, catchpoles,
Some loudly rave, some pensive scratch poles.
Hark! the fierce soldier from within
Exclaiming wild—ye Gods! no Gin?
Wear I this hilt, this useless nob,
Yet see thy fault, puissant Bob?
Adieu to camps, to fighting hours!
Vain life adieu! no Gin, ye pow'rs!
With her we'll ev'ry mother's son die,
Gin dead! *Sic transit gloria mundi*.
See, midst sad Drury-nymphs appears
The beldame matron, all in tears.
Ah! (she complains) the news would grieve a
Hard heart of flint—no dear Geneva!
With nightly watchings when oppressed,
What shall compose me now to rest?
When shall I easy from cholic find?
How close my eyes, or break my w——?
'Reave me of wits, good name, or more, if
My age can bear it—wretch Sir Joseph!
Melpomene! thy succour lend,
Gin was the drooping muse's friend;
Supply'd the want of costlier wants,
And furnish'd rail'ry, smut, and rants.
Now ne'er shall maudlin hostess more
Reverse old rules, and underscore;
Nor coachmen (three parts on your journey)
Bilk their whole fare—and overturn ye.
Gin, source of blunders justly counted—
Stop Muse! I'm unawares dismounted.

Another effusion called

**GENEVA.**

A poem addressed to the Right Honorable Sir
Robert Walpole, by Alexander Blunt, distiller, printed for T. Payne, in Lovell’s Court, Paternoster Row, 8vo, 1729, price 6d.—commences thus—

“Thy virtues, O Geneva; yet unsung
By ancient or by modern bard, the muse
In verse sublime shall celebrate, and thou
O, Walpole, statesman most profound! vouchsafe
To lend a gracious ear; for fame reports
That thou, with zeal assiduous, does attempt,
Superior to Canary or Champagne,
Geneva, salutiferous to enhance;
To rescue it from hand of porter vile
And basket woman, and to the Buffet
Of lady delicate and courtier grand—
Exalt it; well from thee may it assume
The glorious modern name of Royal Bob.”

Whilst Brandy, Cognac, Jamaica Rum, and "costly Arrack" are alluded to, there is no mention of Hollands in this poem, which appears to have been a defence of Geneva, or Gin, against Ale, the grand jury of Middlesex having in their presentment (1728-9) complained "of the great mischief which arose from the number of shops or houses selling a liquor called Geneva."

Perhaps one more extract may be worth giving, not for its poetical merit, but for the statement it contains that Geneva was introduced by William III., and that “Martial William” drank Geneva.
"Great Nassau! immortal name!

Britain's deliverer
From slavery, from wooden shoes, and chains,
Dungeons and fire! attendants on the way
Of tyrant bigotted, and zeal accursed,
Of holy butchers, prelates, insolent,
Despotic, and blood-thirsty! he who did
Expiring liberty revive; who wrought.
Salvation wondrous! God-like Hero! He
It was, who, to complete our happiness,
With liberty restored, Geneva introduced;
O Britons! O my countrymen! can you
To glorious William now commence ingrates,
And spurn his ashes? can you vilify
The sovereign cordial he has pointed out,
Which by your own misconduct only can
Prove detrimental? Martial William drank
Geneva, yet no age could ever boast
A braver prince than he. Within his breast
Glow'd every royal virtue. Little sign,
O genius of malt liquor! that Geneva
Debilitates the limbs, and health impairs,
And mind enervates. Men for learning fam'd,
And skill in medicine, prescribed it then
Frequent in recipe; nor did it want
Success to recommend its virtues vast
To late posterity."

It will be seen that the subject was one of
sufficient importance to occupy the attention and
consideration of all classes, and the attempt to entirely suppress the sale of Spirits met with satirists both in poetry and prose; but there were in those days, as there are in the present, infatuated and red-hot zealots, with whom neither rhyme nor reason could prevail; and although the impossibility of carrying out the law was foretold by many, both within doors and without, yet so furious was the zeal, and so determined the advocates of the last century "Society for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic," that no heed was given to the prophecies of the calm-thinking, intelligent opponents, and, consequently, the measure was passed without much opposition. But it soon became ineffective. President, vice-president, secretaries, and members of the Society for the Total Suppression of the Liquor Traffic! take lessons from history, and read—Tindall tells us:

"The commissioners of excise themselves became sensible of the impossibility or unadvisableness of carrying it into execution; policy as well as humanity obliged them to mitigate the severity of the law, which was now become odious and contemptible."

We have shown the picture Smollett described, and Hogarth painted, of the state of things that was intended to put down, and now let us read what the historian says of the mischief the act itself produced.
“The populace soon broke through all restraint. Though no license was obtained and no duty paid, the liquor continued to be sold in all corners of the streets; informers were intimidated by the threats of the people, and the justices of the peace, either from indolence or corruption, neglected to put the law in execution; in fact, it appeared that the consumption of Gin had considerably increased every year since the duties were imposed.”

Any one acquainted at all with matters of revenue, could have foreseen that this law would only drive the trade out of the hands of the licensed dealers into those of smugglers and illicit manufacturers; and those versed in the science of morals are well aware that nothing but a sound education will ever effectually root out drunkenness or any other vice, and that to tax a vicious indulgence, such as that in drinking, is only to stop up one source, and leave to the cunning of man plenty of others open to enable him to satisfy his propensities.

Sir Robert Walpole saw clearly that the measure would prove inoperative, and though he would not oppose the bill, he predicted that parliament would soon be called upon to modify its provisions. The small duties heretofore levied on this article had brought in about seventy thousand pounds annually; and, as the Excise had been made over to the crown, this sum went to the civil list. Walpole demanded,
therefore, that whatever deficiency of this sum should be produced by the new regulations should be made up to the civil list. The whole measure excited a great clamour out of doors.

"It was regarded," says a writer in Cassell's Illustrated History of England, "as an invidious attempt to abridge the comforts of the people, whilst those of the wealthy remained untouched. The clause proposed by Walpole to protect the revenue was assailed with much fury both in and out of the House. It was said that the minister was quite indifferent to the morals of the people on the one hand, or to their enjoyment on the other, so that the revenue did not suffer."

Immediately the act passed there was danger of rebellion. An insurrection of the populace was threatened, and, as is related in Sir Robert Walpole's letter, but for the precautionary measures taken by the government, there would have been serious rioting and much blood shed. As there were multitudes of offenders, there were at first multitudes of informations; but as soon as any man was known to have informed, he was assaulted and pelted by the mob wherever they could meet with him. A noble peer was obliged to open his gates to one of those unfortunate creatures to protect him from the mob, who were in full cry, and would probably have torn him to pieces if they
could have laid hold of him, for they had before actually murdered some of those informers. This was not the only difficulty; the magistrates themselves were in danger if they appeared zealous in the execution of this law. The prosecutions put the government to infinite expense, the more so as when the person was convicted, seldom could anything be recovered.

The prohibitory law increased the evil it was intended to remove; and the excessive use of Spirits became more general. Under those circumstances, in 1743, the ministry that had newly come into office upon the expulsion of Sir Robert Walpole, brought in a bill into the House of Commons for the repeal of the law which had thus turned out so much worse than a dead letter.

The bill passed the Commons without opposition, but in the Upper House it was not carried till after long and warm altercation. From the debates, which fill nearly three hundred columns of the Parliamentary History, we may glean a few additional particulars corroborative of what we have been relating with respect to the operation and failure of the preceding act.

The increased consumption of Gin during the time it had been in force was admitted on all hands; Lord Lonsdale himself, one of the opponents of the repeal bill, produced an account from which
it appeared that the quantity of Gin distilled in England, which in 1684, when the business was introduced into this country, had been 700,000 gallons, rose in 1694 to over 1,100,100 gallons, and then the consumption increased gradually every ten years, so that in 1734 there were 4,500,000 gallons consumed. But since that time the increase had been greater than it ever was in any former period, "for the consumption is now (1743) above 7,000,000 gallons yearly."

Lord Bathurst, who was in favor of the repeal, mentioned that in the whole kingdom, during the seven years the high duties had been levied, the number of licenses taken out for the sale of Spirits had been only two! The same noble lord remarked that the practices of gin-drinking had of late years extended much farther than was generally imagined; the class of farmers had hitherto been distinguished for their frugality and temperance, but even they had not escaped this infection; nor was anything now more common than to find Gin drunk in those farm houses in which a few years ago Ale was the highest luxury that was thought of. The consequences that had followed from the late act, however, sufficiently showed the inefficiency of violent methods to cure or check the evil.

"It is well known," said his lordship, "that by that
law the use of spirituous liquors was prohibited to the common people; that retailers were deterred from vending them by the utmost encouragement that could be given to informers; and that discoveries were incited by every art that could be practised, and offenders punished with the utmost rigour. Yet what was the effect, my lords, of all this diligence and rigour? A general panic suppressed for a few weeks the practice of selling the prohibited liquors; but in a very short time necessity forced some, who had nothing to lose, to return to their former trade; they were suffered sometimes to escape, because nothing was to be gained by informing against them, and others were encouraged by their example to imitate them, though with more secrecy and caution: of those, indeed, many were punished, but many more escaped, and such as were fined often found the profit more than the loss. The prospect of raising money by detecting their practices incited many to turn information into a trade; and the facility with which the crime was to be proved, encouraged some to gratify their malice by perjury, and others their avarice; so that the multitude of informations became a public grievance, and the magistrates themselves complained that the law was not to be executed. The perjuries of informers were now so flagrant and common, that the people thought all informations malicious; or, at least, thinking themselves oppressed by the law, they looked upon every man that promoted its execution as their enemy, and therefore now began to declare war against informers, many of
whom they treated with great cruelty, and some they murdered in the streets.”

Lord Cholmondeley in a very able speech supported this account, as did several of the other speakers in this debate. The facts being notorious, were not questioned or denied by any of the opponents to the repeal. Lord Bathurst proceeded to state that, by their determination and violence, the people at last wearied out the magistrates, and intimidated all persons from lodging informations, so that the law had now for some years been totally disregarded.

“The practice, therefore, of vending and of drinking distilled Spirits,” continued his lordship, “has prevailed some time without opposition; nor can any man enter a tavern or an ale-house in which they will be denied him, or walk along the streets without being invited to drink them at every corner: they have been sold for several years with no less openness and security than any other commodity; and whoever walks in this great city will find his way very frequently obstructed by those who are selling these pernicious liquors to the greedy populace, or by those who have drunk them till they are unable to move.”

Much disposed as we are to give copious extracts from the very interesting, and, upon both sides, able arguments used in the debate in the House of
Lords, we may, perhaps, infringe too much upon our space with this particular but important event in the history of Gin. (But it was, perhaps, the very despotic and oppressive character of the Gin Act which occasioned many other persons to enlist amongst its opponents, besides those who indulged in Gin.) And the same error and folly distinguish the Teetotal and Maine Law agitators of the present day. Men who are as temperate in their habits as they are moderate and thoughtful in their opinions upon public matters, consider that the evil the Water Party endeavour to suppress is less odious than the rash and mischievous means that are adopted to put it down, and that to allow the promoters of such intolerance to succeed would encourage them to seek for greater infringements upon the liberty of the people.

There was another consequence of the prohibitory Gin Act to which we must refer. The trade in Spirits, abandoned by all respectable dealers, was left in the hands of persons without either means or character, ruffians and desperadoes, upon whom neither law nor public opinion could be brought to bear; and all the revenue that the sale of Spirits would have been made to yield was thrown away and lost in this wild and unseemly scene of universal illicit trading.

In opposition to the repeal the principal ar-
gument urged was, that the sale of Gin, which was now carried on, not, certainly, in secret, or with any attempt at concealment, but still without open proclamation by the dealers of the article they had to dispose of, would in future be thrust forward with an impudent exposure of the name as well as of the liquors, which might not only tend to harden the victims of gin-drinking, but might throw more opportunity and temptation in the way of persons who had not yet fallen into the habit.

In illustration of the extent to which the open retail of Gin was carried before the imposition of the prohibitory duties (which had proved no prohibition and no duties at all), the Bishop of Salisbury (Dr. Thomas Sherlock) quoted a report drawn up in the year 1736, by the justices of Middlesex, according to which the number of gin-retailers in the districts of Westminster, Holborn, the Tower, and Finsbury (exclusive of the City of London and Southwark), was then 7044, "besides 3209 ale-houses that did not sell spirituous liquors, and besides a great number of persons who retailed Gin probably in garrets, cellars, and back rooms, or places not exposed to public view." Every sixth house in the metropolis, it appeared by this report, was then a licensed gin-shop; and the Bishop apprehended that with the reduction of the duties, this state of things, or a worse, would be brought back.
That there would be immediately not fewer than 50,000 gin-retailers set up under the sanction of the government throughout the kingdom. However, although all the Bishops, as well as most of the adherents of the late ministry, voted against it, the repeal bill was ultimately carried; "and we cannot help owning," says Smollett, "that it has not been attended with those dismal consequences which the lords in the opposition foresaw."

Melancholy, indeed, was the spectacle exhibited under the prohibitory law. Lord Lonsdale, although an opponent to the repeal bill, stated in the course of the debate in the Lords that,

"Whoever should pass along the streets of the metropolis would find wretches stretched upon the pavement, insensible and motionless, and only removed by the charity of passengers from the danger of being crushed by carriages or trampled by horses, or strangled with filth in the common sewers."

The operation of the new act was highly satisfactory; the wretched state of things described by Lords Bathurst and Lonsdale was no more heard of. Excessive indulgence in Spirits continued to exist, as it still does, amongst the depraved of the lower orders; but the restoration of the trade to proper surveillance, and the inducement to persons of respectability and responsibility to embark in it, appears to have had an immediate beneficial effect.
Amongst the various manufactures liable to taxation, none have been more unfairly or injudiciously treated than the produce of the distiller, and none more subservient to the caprice of government. Every Chancellor of the Exchequer has made the duties upon Spirits his regulating medium; at one time to meet a deficiency, at another to dispose of a surplus. The excise laws, the regulations and restrictions upon distillers, preventing as they do so much that would facilitate production and improvement in manufacture, are alone enough to bear, but they are trifling in comparison to the evils arising from the uncertainty of the duties from one session to another. The fluctuating character of these will be shown in the tables to be found in the Appendix. As a natural consequence, just prior to the appearance of the Chancellor’s annual budget, the Spirit trade is almost at a standstill, distillers and their customers are uncertain what new freak may be practised upon them, and many are led into speculations not always conducive to the general interests. If a report is prevalent that an additional duty is to be levied, large clearances are made from bond, sometimes to the ruin of the speculator; and when an impression is created that the duties are likely to be reduced, a stagnation of trade is the consequence. None will run the risk of increasing
their duty-paid stock, but prefer to dispose of what they hold at a sacrifice. The imiquitous results attendant upon high duties have been the theme of the greatest political economists of the day, and the injury to the fair trader, by bringing his produce into competition with that which has paid no duty at all, is too well known and felt to need any exemplification. Excessive duties only encourage smuggling and illicit distillation. Immediately the duties are lowered to a reasonable rate, the revenue is increased, the encouragement to illicit manufacture is lessened, and the smugglers' occupation gone. It is stated by the Rev. Mr. Chichester, in his valuable pamphlet on the Irish Distillery Laws, published in 1818, that—

"The Irish system seems to have been formed in order to perpetuate smuggling and anarchy. It has culled the evils of both savage and civilized life, and rejected all the advantages which they contain. The calamities of civilized warfare are, in general, inferior to those produced by the Irish Distillery Laws; and I doubt whether any nation of modern Europe, which is not in a state of actual revolution, can furnish instances of legal cruelty commensurate to those which I have represented."

And what is here said of Ireland is equally true of England. At this present time (1863) the
injudiciously high duties payable upon British Spirits are acting most prejudicially upon the general trade, and the rectifying distillers carrying on business in or near the metropolis have petitioned parliament on the subject. An extract from the document will show the justice of their remonstrances, and effectually support our argument. After some preliminary remarks, the petition goes on to remark upon the result of the changes in the rates of duty, which

"Appears to show that a too high rate of duty has generally been productive of loss in the return of revenue, and that its effects are highly calculated to give encouragement to the trade of the illicit dealer.

"Varying scales of duty in the three countries continued up to the year 1859, but in July, 1860, the Right Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer thought it expedient to raise the duty on Spirit from 8s. 1d. per gallon to 10s. per gallon, anticipating from such increase a permanent additional revenue to the extent of about £1,400,000; the reason for this increase of duty being assigned to be the necessity to provide for the increased expenditure which the country had to meet on account of the war in China.

"Your petitioners are aware that representations from numerous bodies have, during the last three years, been submitted by the distillers of London and by others connected in the like interests in Scotland and Ireland,
to the Right Hon. the Chancellor of the Exchequer, showing in what particulars the views he then entertained have practically failed to be borne out, as also how much the revenue has suffered; and likewise to demonstrate the continued progress of illicit distillation in the three kingdoms as a necessary result of such increase of duty. Your petitioners, however, though not joining in such representations, have not been inattentive observers of the consequences anticipated, but have been waiting for the experience of the past time for maturing their views and judgment upon this question. And your petitioners therefore now consider it more desirable to present their opinions by way of statement to your Honourable House, than by memorial to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in order that they may be brought more into general discussion, though not less under his cognizance, and as the best means of obtaining for the question further consideration and review.

"The annual revenue derived from the duty on Spirits amounts to somewhere about £10,000,000 sterling, and it appears by the returns presented to Parliament that since the high rate of duty of 10s. per gallon was imposed, not only has a very considerable decrease in quantity consumed taken place, but that a large deficit in the annual revenue derived from duty on Spirits has resulted. Your petitioners refer to those statements for the purpose of declaring their conviction, not that the quantity of Spirit made in the country is less, but that a very large quantity of what, in all pro-
bability, is actually consumed, is derived from the in-
crease of resort to illegal means for making and vending
Spirits; and one among the several proofs confirming
this view is, that one of our body was recently offered
Spirits of Wine 63° over proof at the rate of 500 gal-
lons per week, at very little more than half the duty
of 10s. per gallon, to be delivered in bulk in Cham-
pagne cases, lined with tin, so as to make it appear
they were filled with Wine, an extremely easy process
to introduce illicit Spirits among dealers and retailers
without fear of detection."

The petitioners, after confirming their statement
by giving particulars of returns, and alluding to
the increase of prosecutions and convictions for
breaches of the excise laws during and since the
year 1859, urge that the higher the rate of duty main-
tained the greater is the inducement to smuggling
and illicit produce; they consider this has recently
received illustration from the alteration that has
taken place in the reduction of the duty upon cigars,
and conclude by submitting that the policy and
expediency of reducing the duty on British Spirits
to its former rate of 8s. 1d. per gallon as deserving
further consideration and review, &c., &c.

Still more forcible are the arguments used in a
letter* addressed to the Right Hon. B. Disraeli by

*Fiscal Opposition, a Letter addressed to the Right Hon. B.
Disraeli, M.P. W. Blackwood and Sons.
a Scotch distiller, who explains his reason for addressing Mr. Gladstone's opponent, as he states the Chancellor of the Exchequer resolutely refuses to listen to the manufacturers' well grounded complaints—

"When each succeeding year's experience of the legislation complained of proves its injurious and unjust character, it seems a natural alternative to turn from the unsympathising government to the other power in parliament."

We take from this able pamphlet the following:—

"In the year 1849, when free trade, so far as corn is concerned, may be said to have been fairly developed, the duty on British Spirits was 7s. 10d. in England, 3s. 8d. in Scotland, and 2s. 8d. in Ireland. The consumption of Spirits in the United Kingdom that year amounted to 22,962,012 gallons. With no variation in the duty, the consumption increased yearly till 1863, when the quantity consumed or paid duty on in that year was found to be upwards of 25,000,000 gallons. It does not appear that there was any special reason for this rapid rise in the quantity of gallons paying duty; the augmented consumption seems to have resulted from the ordinary course of trade prosperity, while it was not opposed or retarded by excessive or prohibitory duties. In the course of this year an
addition of 1s. per gallon was made to the duty in Scotland, thus raising it to 4s. 8d. In Ireland the duty was raised from 2s. 8d. to 3s. 4d. The English duty remained the same. These rates obtained in Scotland till the 8th May, 1854, when the duty was raised to 5s. 8d.; and again, on the 26th May of the same year, the duty was raised to 6s. In Ireland, the same year, the duty was raised from 3s. 4d. to 4s. per gallon—the English duty remaining the same, 7s. 10d. Notwithstanding these additions to the duty, the consumption in the United Kingdom at the end of 1854 had reached 26,000,000 gallons. In 1855 the Scotch duty was again raised from 6s. to 7s. 10d.; and again, on the 1st October of the same year, it was raised to 8s. In Ireland the duty was raised from 4s. to 6s.; and again, on the 1st October, 1855, to 6s. 2d. At this period the Scotch and English duties were assimilated, both countries being charged a duty of 8s. per gallon. What was the effect of these continued additions to the duty? At the end of the year 1855, the same year that witnessed the different additions, the consumption had attenuated to 22,000,000 gallons.

"This date marks a period in the history of the taxation and consumption of British Spirits. Under a comparatively low rate of duty, we have seen that the consumption increased from under 23,000,000 gallons in 1849 to over 26,000,000 in 1854. Immediately on the high taxation coming into operation, we have seen that the consumption fell from 26,000,000 gallons in 1854 to 22,000,000 gallons in 1855; in other words,"
what it took six years to accumulate, one year sufficed to dissipate. But although a serious check was given to the prosperity of the Spirit trade by the imposition of such high rates of duty, the proverbial "last straw" was not yet laid on. The trade could struggle and make way with all the weight. In the following year, 1856, the consumption was 22,612,231 gallons, an improvement on the previous year of 600,000 gallons. From 1855 to 1860 no change took place in the duty, with the exception of your own well-advised assimilation of the Irish duties to those of Great Britain. In the intervening period the consumption rose from 22,000,000 gallons to nearly 24,000,000 gallons. The trade had gradually recovered from the depression caused by the imposition of the eight shillings duty, and it manifested indications of a still further tendency to improve, when the consumption was again and effectually checked by the duty being raised to ten shillings.

"This date, 1860, marks another and more important period in the Spirit trade. Although the figures last quoted by no means represent the proportions which the consumption had attained ten years previously, yet, as has been already remarked, it was annually increasing, and would, no doubt, shortly have reached its old point. Custom had familiarised the trade to the burden; and, moreover, the eight shillings duty so adapted itself to the peculiarities of the retail trade, that neither those engaged in it nor the consumer felt the tax to be oppressive. As a consequence, the
revenue had reached a most satisfactory point. In 1859 it was £9,700,000, and what made this hitherto unprecedented revenue from Spirits the more satisfactory was, that it was obtained without causing discontentment,—without inconvenience to either the trade or the public. But in 1860 Mr. Gladstone raised the duty in the three kingdoms to ten shillings per gallon. The injurious effects of this policy were at once apparent. At the termination of the year, although the increase had only been in operation six months, the consumption had fallen to 21,800,000 gallons. Six months' experience of a ten shillings duty accounted for the non-appearance of two and a quarter millions of gallons. The depletive process continued steady. In 1861 the consumption was 20,045,000 gallons; in 1862 it was 19,700,250 gallons; and in the year ending 31st of March, 1863, it was 18,788,000 gallons.

"Only the most obstinate determination not to be convinced could prevent any one from seeing in these repeated changes in the rate of duty, and the consequent fluctuations in the consumption of Spirits, the relation of cause and effect. When the duty was reasonable, that is, when it bore some reasonable proportion to the intrinsic value of the commodity, the trade prospered; it naturally increased its dimensions in something like the same ratio with other trades which had been fostered by the usual and common stimulants,—free trade, colonial prosperity, growth of population, &c., When the duty was almost doubled, the con-