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# INDIA AND THE EXCISE REVENUE

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## REPORT OF THE DEBATE

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

*OF MARCH 13th, 1888.*

WITH PREFACE & APPENDIX BY MR. W. S. CAINE, M.P.

PUBLISHED BY THE

**Native Races and Liquor Traffic United Committee,**

127, PALACE CHAMBERS, WESTMINSTER, LONDON, S.W.

## P R E F A C E.

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THE United Committee for the Prevention of the Demoralisation of Native Races by the Liquor Traffic, have decided to print in pamphlet form the debate which took place in Parliament, on the 13th of March, 1888, relative to the excise policy of the British Government.

This debate was raised upon a general motion set down by Mr. SLAGG, M.P. for Burnley, which contained other issues, with which he dealt exhaustively, leaving that portion of his resolution referring to the extension of the sale of intoxicating liquors for revenue purposes, to my care, as seconder. This pamphlet reprints impartially what was said during the debate on this question only, for or against; the charge I make in my speech against the Government of India is the same as that brought against them by the Bishop of London, as president of the British and Colonial Temperance Congress in 1886, which reads as follows:—

“It has been brought to the knowledge of the Congress that habits of intemperance are greatly on the increase in Bengal, and other parts of India, and in Burmah, and that this is largely due to the extension of spirit licenses granted for purposes of excise revenue. The Congress has been informed that the amount of excise revenue in India from spirits *has more than doubled in the last ten years*, and that this is largely due to the system by which the right to license outstills is farmed to the highest bidder, and directly leads to the establishment of shops for the sale of liquor in large numbers of places, where, till recently, such things were unknown, in defiance of native opinion, and unhappily spreading misery and ruin amongst many families of the industrial class.”

The Government of India have formulated a careful reply to these charges. Pending enquiry, debate in the House of Commons would have been useless; but the enquiry having been made, and the reply to the charges having been printed, I felt it my duty to raise the discussion, which is here presented in pamphlet form, and which is worth the careful attention of every social reformer.

I have added a few tables which will throw some additional light on the debate.

W. S. CAINE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

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Mr. SLAGG rose to move :—"That, in the opinion of this House, the unwise frontier policy of the Government of India is producing grave financial difficulties in that country, leading not only to increased burdens of taxation, but to the extension of the sale of intoxicating liquors for revenue purposes, with serious results to the moral and material welfare of the people."

Mr. CAINE : I beg to second the motion of my honourable friend the Member for Burnley. My honourable friend has dealt with a serious cause of increased expenditure, but I desire to say something on the methods by which the Government of India meet it. I have no doubt that the increasing burdens of taxation have stimulated the Government of the different provinces of India to promote and enlarge the sale of intoxicating liquor with very serious results to the people of that country. I wish in my speech to prove that the growing exigencies of the Indian Government is leading to an undue stimulus of the Abkari or excise revenue, by the establishment of spirit distilleries and liquor shops in large numbers of places, where till recently they never existed, in defiance of native opinion and the protests of the inhabitants, and that such increased facility for drinking inevitably produces a steadily increasing consumption and spreads misery and ruin among the industrial classes of India. In 1886 a Meeting was held in London of the British and Colonial Temperance Congress, and certain resolutions were passed and brought to the notice of Lord Cross. The fact is the Indian Government are in the position of licensed victuallers, who hold a monopoly of the liquor traffic, and are responsible entirely for the amount of the liquor that is sold and for the methods by which it is sold. The Commission appointed by the Government of Bengal in 1883-4 show in their report the system under which licences are granted and the conditions under which the liquor traffic is carried on. It shows amongst other things that the licences for working stills and opening liquor shops are, as a rule, granted upon the auction system, being thus put up, as it were, to the highest bidder ; that the license holders are not to sell more than six quart bottles to one person at one time ; that they are not to receive goods in barter for the liquor they sell ; and that they are not to permit notoriously bad characters to resort to their shops. According to the evidence laid before the Commission the out-stills are frequented by large numbers of people, young and old, who are found often in a high state of intoxication singing ribald songs and creating all kinds of disorders. In fact, the condition of things you would expect to find—if uncontrolled and unchecked public-houses should exist in this country—in the lowest slums of London.

In consequence of the agitation which was got up by the British and Colonial Temperance Congress, Lord Cross sent a despatch to the Government of India, and he said that "the Congress had been informed that the increase which recent years have shown in the Excise Revenue of India is due to a system which directly leads to the establishment of shops for the sale of liquor in large numbers of places where, till recently, such things were unknown." A reply was returned on the 26th of June, 1887, and it is No. 166 of the Government of India's papers of that year. This paper is an elaborate reply to the charge of the British and Colonial Temperance Congress. The case of the Government is summed up in the third paragraph, in which it is stated :—"The principles on which they have been based, and which have been unanimously accepted by all the authorities concerned, have

been these, that liquor should be taxed, and consumption restricted, as far as it is possible to do so without imposing positive hardships upon the people, and driving them to illicit manufacture. The facts now placed on record show that in this policy the Local Government have been completely successful, and that the great increase of Excise Revenue in recent years, which the Congress take as evidence of the spread of drinking habits, really represents a much smaller consumption of liquor, and an infinitely better regulated consumption than the smaller revenue of former years." The two sentences I have quoted from this paper very fairly place before the House the controversy between the British and Colonial Temperance Congress and myself, in supporting this resolution, and the Government of India. The reply, all through, is an attempt to prove that instead of the consumption of liquor having increased it has steadily decreased, in consequence of the increased charges of taxation and higher rates of sale of spirits. Now, sir, I wish to point out that in their minute the Government of India frankly admit that the revenues have doubled in ten years.

They said :—"The statement that the population of British India pay nearly twice as much taxation upon the intoxicants they consume as they did ten years ago, is not far from correct. The excise revenue was almost £2,300,000 in 1871-72 till 1873-74. It gradually increased to £2,600,000 in 1878-79, and since that year the rate of increase has been much more rapid, the amount in 1886-87 being £4,265,600." They state in the next paragraph :—"The increase of revenue, it will be seen from this note, is in great measure due to the prevention of smuggling by better administration." I should like to point out that all through this paper there is no evidence adduced as to smuggling and illicit stills. They go on to say :—"It is due also in part to increase of population, and to improved means of communication. But it is in very large measure due to the fact that the last eight years have been years of extraordinary agricultural prosperity." Let me point out in a few words the increase which has taken place during the last five years. In 1883 the revenue obtained from drink was £3,609,000, in 1884 £3,836,000, in 1885 £4,012,000, in 1886 £4,152,000, and in 1887 £4,266,000. There was a steady step rise in the revenue with really no change either in the rate of taxation or of any other method of revenue to complicate the comparison. So that if during these five years the revenue from intoxicating liquors has increased £660,000, or close upon 20 per cent., and there has been no changes in the charges of taxation I think that proves there has been a steady increase and no decrease whatever in the consumption of intoxicating liquor. Now, in spite of these explanations and the repeated contention that diminished consumption is the necessary result of increased taxation, their own detailed figures given in the minute, abundantly prove that consumption increases in spite of increased taxation. There is a very curious memorandum from Mr. E. B. Pritchard, Commissioner of Customs, Salt, Opium, and Abkari, of Bombay, and if anybody ought to know the figures connected with excise revenue it surely ought to be a man who has the whole matter in charge. He carefully selects three districts and gives the figures in each district, and then concludes from these three districts, where there appears to have on the face of it some diminution in the consumption of intoxicating liquors that the same must apply to the twelve other districts of the Bombay Presidency.

On page 7 of this memorandum there is a statement of the number of gallons which had been issued from the distillery of Ahmedabad, a large manufactory situated in the Bombay Presidency.\* The figures begin in 1873, and stop in the year 1882. They begin by giving five years, during which the rate of duty per gallon was one rupee one anna. Wherever the duty is stationary and fixed, there is always a steady increase in the consumption of intoxicating liquor. In the first year, the number of gallons consumed was

\*See Schedule A.

30,000, and in the last year it was 38,000. Then the duty was raised to two rupees, and, naturally, the revenue increased. During the four years there was a steady increase in the consumption of drink, habits were formed, and these drinking habits could not be got rid of, and in spite of the increased revenue, there was an immediate rise in the amount of drink consumed under the two rupee duty. It appears that 21,480 gallons were issued from the distillery in 1878-9, and this amount rose in three years to 27,427 gallons. But then the table is complicated by the consumption of drink in the whole district of Ahmedabad being given, instead of in the town only. In the first years the population of the district supplied was 118,000, but the population of the district supplied in 1881-2 was 856,000, and the figure of 46,000 gallons issued, was given for this largely increased district. *There the figures stop.* I want to know, why the Government, in adopting this memorandum of Mr. Pritchard, which was issued in 1883, did not carry out the remainder of the figures for this particular district. I cannot help thinking that they did not do this, because the figures told altogether against the whole memorandum. In the Ahmedabad district, the consumption has increased from 46,000 gallons in 1882, the last year given, to 48,000, 46,000, 57,000, and 63,000 each year to 1886, so that in this district there has been a steady increase, not of revenue, but of the number of gallons issued from the Government still of 30 per cent. in five years, and the Government deliberately suppress these facts. We find precisely the same thing in almost every statement laid before us. Having garbled Ahmedabad in the first place, then they take the figures from the Bombay island, and we find precisely the same thing.\* There the duty was one rupee for four years, and there was a steady increase in the consumption, from 907,000 to 979,000 gallons. Then the duty was raised to one rupee and 12 annas, and the number of gallons consumed in 1876-7 dropped to 566,000. The consumption rose in the next year to 653,000, an increase of 16 per cent. Then the duty was raised to two rupees and four annas, and the consumption dropped to 585,000 gallons. The consumption steadily rose every year on the same duty till 1881-2 when it reached 630,000 gallons.

Now, why again did they stop there? Because the moment we come to add all these figures to the remaining four or five years available, but suppressed in the minute, we find it tells altogether against the memorandum, and entirely in favour of my own contention, that the consumption of intoxicating liquors is steadily on the increase, and that no increase of duty has done more than give a brief check to its progress. During the four years they give us in this table, from 1879 to 1882, with a duty of two rupees four annas, the total consumption in the four years was 2,336,000 gallons. During the last four years, the figures for which they suppressed, the consumption had risen to 2,503,000 gallons, or a total increase in the four years of 167,000 gallons; and this is how they attempt to prove a decreased consumption! There are other tables relating to the Bombay Presidency which are equally fallacious. They mix up an extended district. They take Surat city and six miles around, carrying their figures from 1873 to 1882, with a view to showing that an increased tax reduced the amount of liquor consumed. But again I fill in the missing figures from 1882 to 1886 for the entire Surat district,† during which time the duty remained fixed. The consumption rose to 237,000 gallons in 1882-3, to 249,000 in 1883-4, to 305,000 in 1884-5, and 324,000 in 1885-6, so that in this district, in which they quote figures up to 1882 to prove their contention that there is a diminished consumption with an increased revenue, the actual increase in the number of gallons of spirits turned out is 144,000 in five years, or something like 75 per cent. Now, I wish the attention of the House to one of the most misleading statements ever put into a State document. It is a statement by Mr. Pritchard, and is to be found on page 9 of the minute I hold in my hand. It is the conclusion Mr. Pritchard draws from his cleverly manipulated

\* See Schedule B.

† See Schedule C.

sets of figures which I have quoted and enlarged upon. It is headed "Reasons for belief that consumption has not generally increased," and the statement is: "If any general increase in consumption had taken place there can be little doubt that it would have shown itself in one or other of the large cities just mentioned, each of which contains a large and thriving population more or less accustomed to the use of ardent spirits. But nothing of the kind has occurred in any of those cities, and as the Abkari administration has been conducted on precisely the same principles in all parts of the Presidency the natural presumption is that the consumption of spirits has not generally increased elsewhere." Now, this memorandum was written in 1883-4, and the Government have drafted it into their minute. Why have not the Government of Bombay furnished tables of the Excise Revenue of the whole Presidency? I can only suppose it is because they would have knocked the bottom out of their own argument. I have tables here, however, which supply the deficiency.\* In 1881-2 the amount of liquor consumed in the whole Bombay Presidency was 1,982,000 gallons, and it rose steadily to 2,607,000 gallons in 1886. Now, at the time Mr. Pritchard wrote this report, he must have known that that very year his total revenue had risen 25 per cent. If he did not, he was more ignorant and incompetent than I can believe. If he did, why does he insult the intelligence of the Government of India by writing such a ridiculous and misleading paragraph. (Interruption).

The UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA (Sir J. E. Gorst) : It is not Mr. Pritchard's memorandum that the hon. gentleman is quoting.

Mr. CAINE : I beg pardon, it is from the Bombay Excise Report for 1884, when Mr. Pritchard was commissioner. I do not know who else is likely to have compiled it ; but it really does not matter very much. The increase in the five years from 1882 to 1886 has been 31 per cent. in native manufactured spirit, and 22 per cent. in imported spirit. Now, let me turn from Bombay to Bengal ; there the out-still system is in full blast, and there are no changes worth notice in revenue charges to complicate the comparison. I hope the House will kindly listen to the figures relating to Bengal, because they are more honest than the figures relating to Bombay.† In the memorandum the figures are brought down to 1886. I will not trouble the House by showing the way in which the number of shops have increased, and how the net revenue from liquor has increased, I will simply say that during the first seven years of the 15 years given in the memorandum, the average revenue from intoxicating liquor was £620,000, during the last seven years the average revenue was £900,000, or an increase of very nearly 50 per cent. I find that just the same has taken place in nearly all the other districts of India. In Madras, in 1882, the revenue from intoxicating liquor was £601,000, while in 1886 it had risen to £810,000, or an increase of 35 per cent. in four years. I have selected these periods because there was no change in the duty during that time. The minute admits that in the Punjab the number of liquor shops has increased from 874 to 1,722 in twenty years, an increase of 120 per cent. The minute admits that in the central provinces the number of liquor shops has increased from 6,000 in 1880 to 8,000 and that the revenue has more than doubled itself in ten years. I will just conclude this investigation in figures by a reference to the North West Provinces. On page 14 of this report it is said :—"The totals for the united provinces, as shown in the margin, exhibit a progressive increase up to 1876-77, a sudden fall of 50 per cent. in 1877-78 (a year of drought), and a rapid recovery afterwards ; until in 1882-83 the issues are 56 per cent. in excess of those of 1872-73, and this notwithstanding the extension of the farming and out-still system to an area of over 15,000 square miles, with a population of seven million persons." Now, these figures show a total issue

\* See Schedule D.

† See Schedule E.

during the first four years—1872 to 1876—of 4,632,000 gallons. During the last four years—from 1882-83 to 1886—the issue has risen to a total of 5,692,000 gallons, an increase of 1,000,000, or 22 per cent. in the four years. But here again there is a stoppage in the year 1883, and again I ask myself why these figures are not carried beyond this particular year, and again I say because had they been, it would have completely knocked the bottom out of their argument. The official report of the North West Provinces for 1886 says :—“The revenue from excise has continued to advance steadily, and the gross receipts for the year under report *are the highest on record*, showing an increase of 12 per cent. on the previous year.”

And there is another significant paragraph in the report, namely :—“The high rise in Cawnpore is due to the opening of the new distillery. . . . At Benares the license fees for the year were very high, and to make their business profitable the retail dealers lowered their prices and thus largely increased the sales of liquor.” That is one of the commonest evils of this Abkari system. They give far too high a price for the monopoly, and then, finding they are not making as much money as they thought they ought, they decrease the price and very largely increase the sale. Now I contend that the whole tendency of the Excise system is to increase the consumption, and that I have proved it to the hilt from the very documents which the Government of India, misled by some feeble mendacious official, have put forward to prove the contrary. The Government are driving this liquor trade as hard as they can. Collectors find it the easiest way to increase their contribution to the revenue, and for years they have been stimulating the consumption of liquor to the utmost. If the Government continue their present policy of doubling the revenue every ten years, in 30 years India will be one of the most drunken and most degraded countries on the face of the earth. I pass away now to another phase of the subject, namely, that the Government foster and extend this system in defiance of native opinion and the protests of the inhabitants, and constantly establish out-stills in districts where drinking is practically unknown. In the Bombay presidency the number of shops increase steadily. In 1884-5 the number of shops was 3,594, and in 1885-6 3,977, an increase of 11 per cent. in a single year. I commend to the hon. and learned gentleman, the Under Secretary for India, a study of the North Western Provinces' Annual Report for 1886-7, and also the Bombay Presidency Report for the same year. On page 8 of the Report for the North Western Provinces we are told that “The district reports contain repeated assurances from all parts of the provinces that drinking is practically unknown.” I should have thought this an eminently satisfactory condition of things, and one which would have induced any responsible Government to congratulate themselves.

On page 7 of the same report we are told how an enlightened Government is trying to get rid of such a happy moral condition, and such an unhappy condition of revenue. “In some districts the number of shops were below Government standard. Attempts were made to increase them, but not with conspicuous success. From Etah, Etawah and Muttra, many new licenses had to be withdrawn because no liquor was sold, and that new shops put up for auction were not bid for.” Another paragraph states that “In the Jhansi district, on the other hand, the number of shops is largely in excess of the Government standard, and although the Commissioner of Excise makes no report thereon, it appeared from the district reports that at present it is inexpedient to make any considerable reduction in this number.” Exactly, where there are none they force them in, and where there are too many they refuse to reduce them; and that is the Abkari policy all through India. On page 7 in this minute Mr. Pritchard makes this statement : “In Ahmedabad several new shops were opened last year. A petition objecting to some of them was presented to the collector, who, after inquiry, ordered four of them

to be closed." That is what I call local option at the wrong end. If the Government had consulted the inhabitants of the district before the shops were opened, the probability is that the shops would never have been opened at all. What the people demand is, that they should be consulted in the matter of the opening of new drinking shops. The same gentleman also expresses the opinion—and it is at the bottom of the whole thing—"It is an essential point in good Excise administration to place licit liquor within easy reach of all persons wanting drink." I could quote passage after passage from other provincial reports in the same direction, but time does not permit. I have spent a month in India with this question mainly in my mind. Every native of influence and intelligence, every Christian missionary, every Englishman, civil or military, who knows anything whatever of the natives, confirmed my own personal observation in the belief that the few passages I have quoted from the report of the North Western Provinces, sufficiently indicates the disastrous policy of the Government of India in their efforts to raise revenue out of the vice and degradation of the people.

I want to say a word upon the question of illicit distillation, of which a great deal is made. It is contended all through the minute that there is no real increase in consumption because in the earlier years when revenue was small there was a large amount of illicit distillation. This is sheer humbug. Illicit distillation seldom exists until the Government has created a demand by setting up a licit distillation. I was told that if there is a district where there is no out-still, the liquor farmer gets a man who does not mind a month's imprisonment to start an illicit still. That affords them an excuse for demanding a license from the collector on the plea of bringing in a large amount of additional revenue. The report of the Commissioner appointed to inquire into this very question in Bengal completely bears out the statement I have just made as to the way in which illicit distillation is brought about. Christian missionaries feel that these out-stills are the greatest difficulties they have to deal with, for they ruin the work in which they are engaged. I don't wonder that so great an authority on Indian questions as Sir William Hunter, in the wonderful speech he delivered lately on the religions of India, declared if Christian missionaries are to succeed in India it must be upon the total abstinence basis. I could, if time permitted, quote from the report of the Bengal Commission, and from many other sources, to show that the natives protest against this out-still system, and declare it as their absolute opinion that it largely increases drinking in India. The system has induced habits of intemperance where they never existed before, because it encourages the consumption of spirits where spirits were never drunk before. I recommend any Member of the House who wishes to know more of the opinions of the natives of India to get the report of the Excise Commission in Bengal and read for themselves. The great objection taken to our argument is that, after all, if you take the total amount of liquor consumed in India, and divide it by the population, it does not come to much more than a pint or a pint and a half per head. But it must be remembered that there is an immense Mahomedan population who never drink at all; it is altogether against their religion.

Then, again, most of the castes of India do not drink; indeed, from all the inquiries I have been able to make, from those who know the districts of India thoroughly well, I don't believe there are more than 20,000,000 or 25,000,000 people altogether who are in the habit of drinking intoxicating liquor, and even these generally drink it rarely on festive occasions, and not as a beverage. I do not know that I have any remedy to propose for this state of things that is likely to be accepted by the Government of India in their present frame of mind. The remedy I suggest is an exceedingly drastic one: it is that the principle which is gaining ground everywhere where the Anglo-Saxon race is to be found—the principle of Local Option—in respect



to this question should be applied in India. It is, of course, very much easier to apply the principle of Local Option where liquor shops do not exist than where they do. In India, however, there is no personal monopoly. The monopoly belongs to the Government, so that the question of compensation for vested interests does not enter into the calculation. I sincerely trust the Government of India will seriously consider whether it is not desirable before they establish any new out-still in any district to find out whether it is the wish of the main body of the people in such district that an out-still should be established. I am perfectly certain that if this were honestly done there would not be another out-still established throughout the length and breadth of India. There is no doubt whatever that the mass of evidence contained in the two volumes from which I have quoted is full of most valuable information. I am sorry to say that the reports have not been acted upon, like the reports of a great many other Royal Commissions and special inquiries in this country and elsewhere. I suggest to the Government that they should appoint a commission, a fair commission, a commission which would include a large proportion of natives in its composition, and that in every province of India a similar inquiry to that which has taken place in Bengal should be made. I have no desire to occupy the time of the House any longer, but I think I have fully proved my case. I have fully shown that in consequence of the policy which has been recently pursued in India of increasing the expenditure unduly, they are compelled to resort to a method for raising revenue which is fraught with disaster to the people of India. I have the very greatest pleasure in seconding the resolution of my honourable friend.

**LORD R. CHURCHILL :** When I saw that the hon. member for Burnley had secured an early night for his motion, I thought it was a fortunate circumstance in the interests of India. But that good fortune is considerably diminished, from the Indian point of view, from the extremely confused manner in which the affairs of India have been presented to the House. We have had two subjects of great importance brought before the House mixed up as if they were connected—two subjects which have not the remotest connexion the one with the other. It shows the laxity of the rules of this Assembly, that a discussion on Indian affairs should be permitted to take such a course as this discussion has taken to-night. I must utterly decline to follow the hon. member for Barrow into the subject with which he has dealt at such length. That is the question which merits a discussion on its own account, and ought not to be mixed up with the other question. But the excise laws require to be debated with sanity and common sense, and not with the heat and acrimony which the hon. member imports into every discussion when alcoholic drinks are concerned. I confine, therefore, my remarks to the first paragraph of the resolution, which deals with the unwise frontier policy of the Government of India.

**Sir G. CAMPBELL** said that he was thankful to the noble lord for the very important speech which he had just delivered, which contained an immense amount of truth. For his own part he entirely concurred in a great deal that the noble lord had said. The House ought to come to some definite conclusion as to the character of the policy which the Indian Government ought to pursue with regard to their frontiers and to the excise. He admitted that the excise question should be carefully considered. It was the only progressive revenue of India, and had been going up by leaps and bounds. He did not go so far as his hon. friend the Member for Barrow, in attributing the most wicked designs to the Government of India. The excise question in India was very much the same as the excise question in this country, that was to say, with the advance of wealth, civilization and Christianity, people drank more now than in former times. Being the same question, therefore,

as we had to deal with at home, he thought we were bound to face it very much in the same spirit. As regarded Bengal, he thought there was good ground of complaint that the Government had pursued a policy which he considered very objectionable, and which the report of the Commission showed had led to a great increase of drinking through an unjustifiable change of the system, made rather for the sake of the revenue than to restrict the consumption of spirits. He could not believe that the Government of India had entered into any conspiracy of wickedness in that matter; but, agreeable as it might be in relation to finance to have an increased revenue from excise, they should examine the system carefully, and if there were blots in it they should be got rid of, even, if necessary, at some sacrifice of revenue. In conclusion, he said they were greatly indebted to the noble lord for his admirable speech, in which the most important considerations had been submitted to the attention of the House, and he hoped that the Government would proceed in the course which the noble lord had, when in office, intended to follow, because the present financial situation was more grave than any which they had hitherto encountered, and the conscience of this country was now awakened to questions connected with India in a way in which it had never been awakened before.

Sir J. GORST thought that the mover and the seconder of the resolution before the House were to be congratulated on their ingenuity in framing a resolution in such terms as enabled two perfectly distinct subjects to be mixed up in debate. It was perfectly justifiable for the hon. member and others who criticised the excise administration of India to argue that particular systems might lead to increased drinking; but it was stated or insinuated that the officers of the Government deliberately propagated drunkenness for the purpose of revenue. (Mr. Caine expressed dissent). That might not be what the hon. member himself had said, but it was what had been said by others. When they said that officers of the Government of India deliberately propagated drunkenness to increase the revenue they were guilty of calumny against an honourable and upright class of men as could be found in any part of Her Majesty's dominions. That statement, as the hon. member reminded them, he would not say originally emanated from, but, as far as he was concerned, he had first found it in a memorial from the British and Colonial Temperance Congress, of which the Bishop of London was president. What he complained of was that that statement substantially was found in the present resolution. It was implied in the present resolution that the policy of the Government of India led to the extension of the sale of intoxicating liquors for revenue purposes. Now he had stated over and over again in that House while he had the honour of holding his present office what the policy was of the Secretary of State for India, and of the Government of India—a policy which was not a new, but an old policy, and which was enforced by the instructions of the Government on all their excise officers. It was the policy of the Government to place as high a tax as possible on the spirits which were distilled as could be placed upon them without giving rise to smuggling and illicit distillation, and the measure of the height to which it was sought to raise the price was not that which would give the greatest revenue, but that which would most diminish consumption. Now, that being the policy of the Government, embodied in instructions to the officers of the Government, why should those officers be so wicked as the Bishop of London and the hon. member seemed to suppose; those men were absent from this country, they would read these calumnies for the first time in the newspapers, and it was quite impossible for them to answer. No doubt most of them were as callous to newspaper criticism and to speeches as members of this House generally were; but some were deeply sensitive men, who would read with great pain charges which were so thoughtlessly thrown about by Bishops and Members

of Parliament. The House would forgive him for saying these few words, because when things were said against the officials of India without one tittle of evidence to support them, it was his duty to defend them.

Mr. CAINE : I wish to state what my charge was. I charged the revenue officers with stimulating the revenue in intoxicating liquors, and I maintained that it is impossible to do that without producing an increase of drunkenness.

Sir J. GORST : The hon. member practically charged them with stimulating the revenue by stimulating drunkenness. He must protest against the view of the hon. gentleman opposite. The Government of India, as such, had no policy on the subject, and it had no excise system. It was entirely a matter for the Local Governments.

Mr. CAINE said he used the plural—Governments. He knew it was purely a provincial matter.

Sir J. GORST said the system was different in every province, and was controlled by local Legislature where these existed. There were various causes of differences in the system—difference in race, habits, religion, and of languages, and so on—existing in different provinces. The differences were often quite as great as between one country and another in Europe. It was, therefore, absolutely impossible to apply one rigid system to all the provinces. The two provinces in which there was the least consumption per head, were the Punjab and Assam, and in those districts, the consumption was a quarter of a pint for each adult male. The population in the Punjab was a sober Mohamedan population. The system in force was the Central Distillery system. The system in Assam was entirely the out-still system, owing to its backward condition. The consumption per head was the same as in the Punjab, but the people were addicted to the use of opium and gurja. The hon. member had indiscriminately complained of every province and of the administration of every province. He complained of Bombay, where the central distillery system exclusively prevailed, and of the North-Western Provinces. The general opinion was that the central distillery system was best both for morality and, it might seem strange to add, for the revenue. The out-still system was exploded in all the provinces except Bengal and Assam, which were in that respect notoriously the most backward of all the provinces. In Bengal the system was condemned and in process of being changed. The out-still system, however, prevailed, because there were tracts, without roads, and with a scanty population, where there was nothing which could replace it. In such districts the choice lay between the out-still system and no system at all. ("Hear, hear" from Mr. Caine.) The hon. member seemed to think that if out-stills were abolished, there would be no liquor at all. But every revenue officer in India was opposed to that view. The universal opinion was, that such a course would only lead to the increase of smuggling. But in the districts where the out-still system prevailed, the difficulty of changing it was caused by the absence of roads and the impassable nature of the country in the rainy season. It ought not, however, to be forgotten that the spirit made in these out-stills was very weak—60, 75, and even 90 under proof; whereas European spirit was only 15 or 20 under proof. This liquor was thus not stronger than sherry or beer, and would not pay for carriage to a long distance, which would turn it sour; and if the out-still system were put down the people would either have to go without the drink to which they were accustomed, or have recourse to an illicit supply or by distilling for themselves. The fact was that the criticism upon the Excise system of India was really a criticism upon the Excise system of Bengal. In 1884 an Excise Commission was appointed, consisting of two Europeans and two natives, which examined witnesses and issued a most valuable report. That report had been acted upon ever since, and in 1885-6 the central dis-

tillery system was extended to ten districts, and the number of central distilleries increased from 479 to 590. The out-stills were reduced from 3,943 to 3,614. An experiment was tried at Patna under a native deputy-collector who had been a member of the Commission. A sudder district was marked out for central distilleries, and an outer circle fixed five miles off, within which no out-stills were allowed. The number of out-stills outside the sudder circle was fixed, the capacity limited, an upset price laid down for the stills, and a *minimum* price put upon the liquor sold. All this was done in pursuance of the recommendations of the Commission. In 1886-7 the experiment was extended to the whole of Bengal, and it was found that the central distilleries had increased from 590 to 672, though the out-stills remained practically the same, the reduction only being from 3,614 to 3,608. But though the number was so little reduced, the capacity was reduced from 111,538 gallons to 74,788, or 33 per cent. The special difficulty of Bengal was that, owing to the Permanent Settlement, there was a want of revenue officers, with which class of men Bombay and Madras were plentifully supplied. The total consumption of spirits in India was only one-quarter of a gallon a head, which contrasted very favourably with that of the United Kingdom, where each person drank one gallon of spirits and  $26\frac{1}{2}$  gallons of beer. In Bengal there was only one liquor shop to every 13,000 or 14,000 of the population and in six years, though the population had increased 7 per cent., the spirit shops had been reduced 28 per cent. and the fermented liquor shops 30 per cent. He now desired to say a word or two about toddy. He had heard an hon. member say in that house that toddy was a comparatively wholesome beverage. So indeed it was, when it was first drawn from the tree, but in the course of a few hours it fermented itself and became as strong as fairly strong beer. His hon. friend had repeated in that House the statement that the consumption of toddy might be encouraged instead of the consumption of spirit. He should like to read to the House an extract from the report of the Bengal Excise Commission. That extract, which put an entire stop to the contention, was as follows :—

“A majority of the Commission hold very strongly that wherever fermented liquors come into active competition with country spirit the proper policy of Government should be so to shape its Excise regulations as to encourage the use of the former ; and they believe that if this were done, it would be found safe to put restrictions on the manufacture of country spirit in such districts, which would be dangerous in other districts. Baboo Krisna Behari Sen, one of the members of the Commission, has been unable fully to agree in this view, as he does not feel justified in recommending to the Government a policy calculated to encourage the use of any intoxicating drink, and he is not satisfied that any real benefit to the cause of temperance would necessarily follow such encouragement, even though some decrease in the consumption of distilled spirit might be the immediate result. The majority of the Commission are convinced that fermented liquors are on the whole preferable to distilled spirit as being more wholesome, less intoxicating, and not so likely to lead to habits of confirmed drunkenness, but they are compelled to acknowledge that there is much to support their colleague's objection. It is notorious that drunkenness is more common during the tari season than at almost any other time of the year, and that much of it is due to that liquor. There are constant complaints of drunkenness among the Sonthals and other aboriginal people supposed to be caused by country spirit, but really due to pachwai. Very many of the allegations made by missionaries, planters and others, against the evils and abuses of the out-still system turn out when examined to be really based on facts connected with the use or sale of fermented liquors; and it frequently happens that the shop described and complained against as an out-still is found to be a tari or pachwai shop. All this shows that fermented liquors in Bengal are not so

harmless as they are sometimes held to be. But after a very careful consideration of the whole question, the majority of the Commission have come to the conclusion that the advantages which they hoped would attend the substitution of fermented liquors for spirit, especially among those aboriginal races who have lately taken to the latter, are so great as to outweigh the objections to giving any direct encouragement to the use of the former."

Tari, he might explain was the Bengal word for toddy. The Government of Bombay had attempted to mitigate the intoxication, which undoubtedly prevailed from a too great use of the hon. gentleman's favourite beverage, by putting a tax upon the trees. The fact was that the Excise regulations of the Government of India began in the year 1790, and had their origin in complaints of increasing drunkenness owing to the extreme cheapness of untaxed liquor. It was the extreme cheapness of liquor which was the chief difficulty in the enforcement of temperance in India. A man could get drunk for a halfpenny, the cost of a quart of mowhra spirit. What he wanted the House to conclude from the observations he had made, was that the principle of Abkari legislation and administration was perfectly sound and had been long adopted. But the application of this principle was attended with difficulties in some places, arising from local circumstances of which members of the House of Commons must necessarily be ignorant, and in regard to which it could not acquire for itself reliable information. For the carrying out of this sound principle we must trust the officers of the Government and the local Legislature, who were native as well as European. There was no ground for any alarm as to the increase of drinking habits in general throughout India. The statement that we found the people sober and had left them drunk, was one of those clever epigrams which caught the ear of those only who were ignorant, and perhaps culpably ignorant, of the true facts of the case.

Mr. S. SMITH (Flintshire) said, he found an universal consensus of opinion in India that a great increase of intemperance was taking place. He did not think anyone in India would dispute that fact. If the Under Secretary for India were to pay another visit to the country, and pay attention to this question, he thought he would return with very much changed views. He said, further, that the general opinion in India was that the great increase of intemperance was largely due to the unwise system adopted by the Government with regard to the excise. He put several questions on the subject last session, to which replies were given, all of a more or less unsatisfactory kind. The Government of India had sent home two despatches dealing with this question, one of them a very important despatch, to which reference had been made. He believed that that despatch was altogether misleading, its conclusions fallacious, and the figures to which it pointed altogether incorrect. It was remarkable that that despatch scarcely alluded at all to the Report of the Bengal Excise Commission. That Commission had devoted an immense amount of attention to the subject, and issued a very elaborate report filling two large volumes, and it had been his trying duty to wade through a large portion of it. He might say that the conclusions arrived at in that report, drawn up by the officials of the Government in Bengal, were altogether at variance with the despatch of the Government of India. From that despatch one would think that the great object of the Government was to reduce consumption of strong drink to a minimum, and that Bengal was rapidly advancing in the direction of temperance. But the Commission had come to the conclusion that there was an enormous increase in the sale of intoxicating drink in that Presidency. It made a calculation that the consumption of intoxicating drink had increased in eight years by 135 per cent. Would anyone dispute the soundness of this conclusion which was arrived at by the Commission after

'taking all kinds of evidence upon the subject? He thought not. But to what was that enormous increase ascribable? It was ascribable to the introduction of the out-still system—that was to say, the farming out of the liquor trade over a large district to contractors with the power, virtually, of opening as many drinking-shops as they chose in their districts. That ruinous system came into operation in 1876, and the revenues rose in eight years after that time from £600,000 to £1,000,000, and the Commission concluded that the consumption had increased to the extent he had mentioned. He would read to the House a letter from a retired civilian, which gave a clear and accurate account of the system.

It was as follows;—“To explain this by a case in point, in the year 1884 it was my duty, as the officer in charge of a district over 6,000 square miles in area, and with a population of 750,000 souls to dispose of the farm or monopoly for both distilling and selling country spirits in it. The *modus operandi* was as follows:—Tenders were called for as to who would engage to sell the largest quantity of spirits within the period of his farm, the contractor binding himself to pay the still-head duty to the State, whether he were able to dispose of the whole quantity which he engaged to sell or not. The tenders were forwarded to the Commissioner of Excise, who accepted the tender of the farmer who promised to sell the most liquor and to pay the still-head duty on it to the State. This tender very much exceeded that of the year before, and the farmer, who was an enterprising Parsee, soon began to ask for permission to open fresh liquor shops in villages were formerly none had existed. This permission, though not always granted, was accorded in some cases where he succeeded in making out that a demand for liquor existed, which was met before by smuggled illicit spirits.”

Another letter from a retired Indian civilian said—“I assure you it went against my conscience the way I had to take tenders for the liquor farm at — The man who promised to sell the greatest quantity of spirits in the course of the year got the contract for farming the liquor. The Parsee contractor who promised to pay still-head duty on the largest quantity of spirits within the period of his farm, one twelvemonth, got the farm. Naturally as soon as he did so, he wanted to open out more shops in as many fresh villages as he could.”

Anyone could see that such a system necessarily conduced to the spread of intemperance and to the rapid introduction of the sale of strong drink. Here was another instance out of a vast number which had come under his notice as to the effect of the out-still system reported by the Rev. Thomas Evans.

“We have an out still at Bistopore which has been the sole cause of the miserable ruin that now stares us in the face. Bands of hardy peasants are neglecting cultivation, and pass the whole days in the out-stills, where they not merely sacrifice their hard-earned money but corrupt their souls too. Street fights, scenes of violence, and other intolerable excesses are everyday events. I am at my wits' end to find out the reason why our rulers introduced into our country a system which kills us body and soul, and in return gives them but a paltry sum for licence tax. To check the growing evil we have set up an association here, and are trying hard to discourage drinking. We have, however, done very little, and our mission will evidently prove a hopeless failure if Government does not interfere. To frustrate our efforts the grog shops have formed a combination amongst themselves, and are doing all in their power to discourage our cause. They even threaten the villagers by instituting false suits against them, and are on the look-out to thrash secretly the more energetic members of our association. In the course of a month matters have taken so serious a turn that we can hardly venture on out-door business after twilight but at the risk of our lives.”

He (Mr. S. Smith) had waded through masses of evidence of the same

nature as this. Then he would point that the out-stills extracted a liquor much more deleterious than that which was produced under the old system, which might be described as being comparatively pure. In proof of that he would quote the evidence of one of the owners of out-stills, who said—"First of all we extract the pure spirit. This we cannot sell under a rupee a bottle, and we keep it for the few who can afford to pay for it. Then we go on forcing all we can out of the refuse of the Mowah by extra boiling. This is inferior stuff and very bitter, but we add plenty of water to make it sweet, and to sell it cheap, and it is strong enough to make the people drunk. And being cheap and strong they like it, and we sell plenty of it at great profit." Now, the Secretary of State for India had said that as much drink could be had for a half-penny as would make a man drunk. But the universal testimony of those examined before the Bengal Commission, was that the excessive cheapness of drink made from the out-stills, was one of the chief causes of the spread of drunkenness throughout the Bengal Presidency. He had received great complaints with regard to the drink-shops among the coolie population in India. The House was aware that tea cultivation was fast spreading in India, and that the custom was to import coolies to carry on the business. He had received a letter from a planter in Assam which explained how the system worked there. The letter contained the following passages:—"Is it not a significant fact that throughout the Province of Assam, at least the portion I have been in, that any stranger can tell he is nearing a tea-garden when he sees the array of bottles set out to tempt the coolie to drink? Petitions have been sent in by many planters; but although it is known in many instances the sub-divisional officers sympathise with the planters, they dare not contravene what the Chief Commissioner lays down on pain of what is well known would follow, stoppage of promotion, &c. &c. It would be futile for us planters to agitate in the matter, as it would naturally bring us, or those who took a leading part, into disrepute with the Government, which no one cares to risk." He (Mr. S. Smith) said that wherever there were coolies in India they were now tempted by those grog-shops, which were planted in the district in order to gain revenue, and that, too, against the protests of the employers. He would now quote a statement made by the Bengal Commission appointed four years ago, which represented the final conclusion they arrived at. It was that—"There has been undoubtedly, a very great increase of late years in the number of spirit drinkers among the wage-earning classes, including those who cultivate land on their own account in addition to working for hire. This has been most marked in the Behar spirit-drinking tract, in the cities of Bengal, and in the centres of the jute-pressing, cotton and jute-spinning, and coal-mining industries."

SIR RICHARD TEMPLE (Worcester, Evesham) : What is the date of that ?

Mr. S. SMITH : That was in 1884. The Bengal Commission reported in that year as to the lamentable effect of the multiplication of spirit licenses in Bengal, and the evidence was so strong that the Government felt compelled to alter the system of giving out licences, and for two or three years there was a great reduction in the number issued, and in consequence a considerable falling off in the revenue to the extent of 10 per cent or more. But what then happened? The Government found that the revenue was falling off, and resolved to go back to the old system. He had put a Question to the Under Secretary for India with reference to a case in a district of Bengal where 50 new stills had been opened. The Under Secretary for India could not deny the fact; He was compelled to admit that the Government were going back to the old system of out stills; he did not deny that 50 new stills had been opened in a single district, in spite of the urgent remonstrances of the Natives. It was said that the Bombay Excise system was conducted on most excellent principles. It had been his part to bring

before the House of Commons the history of the temperance movement which had taken place in the Bombay Presidency at Tannah and Colaba. That movement resulted in considerable loss to the liquor contractor. It was represented to Government that a general temperance movement had taken place among the population; that they were under pledges not to take drink; and the contractor who farmed the revenue set the law in motion and called on the Government to suppress the movement. That was brought before the House last year. It was denied, of course, that the Government had done anything of the kind. He now asked the House to refer to one or two official documents, and he would then appeal to hon. Members to say whether there was not a considerable residue of truth in the statement made last year, that the Government were hostile to this temperance movement. In a despatch of the Governor of Bombay to the Secretary of State for India there was this passage:—"The question for decision is, shall we sit quiet and allow this movement in the Colaba district to continue and to spread, and thereby to forfeit a large amount of revenue, or are measures to be adopted which will bring the people to their senses?"

He denied that anyone could read such a despatch and say that it was in favour of temperance. This movement was reducing the revenue derived from the liquor traffic in Bombay; and he would now read a proclamation issued by the magistrate of Colaba, and he would ask whether that document favoured the idea that the Government were in favour of this movement? The words of the proclamation were—"Notice is hereby given to all that I have heard that some bad people are endeavouring to force people who have a right to buy liquor and consume the same, not so to buy or consume the same, and use threats on those who would not listen to them. This warning is therefore given to such people that by so doing they are only incurring the risk of a criminal prosecution. The people are at liberty to drink or not to drink liquor as they choose; and whoever shall threaten them, saying that they should not drink, or commit assault, should be prosecuted and severely punished with the punishment prescribed in law.—A. KEYSER, District Magistrate, Colaba."

Eight men were actually imprisoned. He asked any impartial person, what construction could be put on a proclamation of that kind; what would be the effect of its being posted up in the midst of a population which trembled at the mention of an English magistrate? Only one construction could be placed upon it. These people were made to feel that in not using the liquor shops they were offending the Government. The proclamation had to be withdrawn, but the Government who withdrew it still said it was perfectly legal. Of course, there were the usual excuses; it was stated that the men in prison had practised intimidation to prevent the people using the liquor shops. But what did it amount to? It came merely to this, that a rule was made that people should be put out of caste and fined 50 rupees if they entered the liquor shops. But putting out of caste was a social regulation with which the Government had never before interfered! and now when a Native was threatened to be put out of caste for drinking liquor the Government came down with their heavy hand and threatened and punished the individuals who had enforced that social regulation. He said it was the same as when a congregation in this country made a rule that those who took intoxicating drinks should be turned out of membership. He said it was preposterous that this should be made a reason for punishing those who were advancing the temperance movement in India. The Under Secretary for India had joked him on the subject of toddy. He would tell the House what toddy was.

In almost every piece of ground attached to houses in India there were palm trees, and out of those trees was obtained a juice which if used directly it came from the tree was most refreshing and unintoxicating. But the



Government had put a heavy tax on those trees and the result was that the people not being able to afford the tax were driven to the liquor shops which were farmed out to the highest bidders. It was clear that if the people could not get this toddy they would go to the liquor shops. The Government said that this was not a genuine temperance movement, but that it was merely a strike against the tax on toddy. He said that the Government ought to be thankful to see the people becoming temperate, no matter from what cause it arose. Further, he said that the drink sold to the people in the liquor shops was exceedingly injurious, particularly to the Asiatic constitution. There was no such thing as a moderate consumption of drink possible in Asiatic countries; everyone knew that, and he would like to refer to a striking article on Islam in *The Contemporary Review* for February, 1888, which said that, "owing probably to some hitherto untraced peculiarity of either their physical or more probably mental constitution, alcohol in any quantities seemed to set most Asiatics—the Jews were an exception—on fire, to produce an irresistible craving for more, to compel them to go on drinking until they were sunk in a stupor of intoxication." There was no middle course possible. There was no class of people in India such as we had in this country who used a small amount of intoxicants with apparently little injury. You had in India a population who were by nature and religion total abstainers, but who when they took to drink soon became paupers and vagabonds; so that he said this question was much more serious with regard to India than with regard to England. The people of India believed that a great wrong had been done to their country; they asked for what we demanded—namely, for Local Option. He had been told that every municipality in India would suppress the use of strong drinks if the Government would allow them. But the Government would not allow them. We were doing in India with drink what we had done in China with opium. We began by sending 200 chests of opium; the Chinese did not want it, but we were told that so small a quantity would not do the people any harm. But now we sent nearly 100,000 chests annually, and the people in China were being slowly poisoned by this traffic.

The opium traffic grew by slow degrees, always with some excuse, till it became so huge it was impossible to stop it. The drink trade was growing in a similar manner; and wherever it extended itself it meant ruin, misery, and death to the people of India. He felt very strongly on this subject, because he saw that unless some check were put upon this trade it would certainly continue to grow. The Government in India was always in want of revenue. The taxation of the consumption of liquor was one of the easiest ways by which revenue could be raised; the revenue from this source had nearly doubled within the last ten years, and unless something was done within the next ten years it would double again. The interest of the entire Indian Service was bound up with the growth of revenue. The system under which they lived necessarily compelled them to seek new sources of revenue, and they would be more than human if they did not wink at the means by which the revenue was obtained. Finally, he said that the only sound principle on which to govern India was that we should regard it as a great trust confided to us by Almighty God, having solely in view the good of its people; and in so doing he believed we should receive the reward of an enduring and honourable connection with that country.

SIR R. TEMPLE said the hon. member for Barrow had lately returned from a tour round the world. During that time, like the hero of the *Odyssey*, he had seen the cities of many men, and he doubted not he thought he had discerned their tempers and dispositions. Having returned, he sat opposite, the Ulysses of Barrow-in-Furness. During that tour the hon. gentleman honoured India by staying there one full month, and during that period he assured the House that the one question mainly on his mind was the liquor

traffic, and that every clergyman and missionary to whom he spoke was unanimous on the subject. The House would readily see that, with that strong feeling of his—he was going to say prejudice, but it would not be respectful—the hon. gentleman naturally saw everything through an exclusive medium. He would be doing the hon. gentleman no injustice when he said he was one of the apostles of the temperance movement. He desired to speak with all respect and sympathy of the temperance party, but the House knew that they were somewhat given to exaggeration even where verification of the facts was possible. How great must the temptation to exaggerate be in a country where no verification was possible. He desired for a few moments to come to close quarters with the hon. members for Barrow and Flintshire, and he ventured to affirm that the leading desire of the Government of India and its officers was to tax liquor and thereby limit its consumption. If the motives were different he was one of the gentlemen incriminated, for the House would remember that he had at different times governed one-half of that great Empire. Was it likely—was it even credible—that such a body as the Government of India and its officers could ever be parties to such a nefarious policy as to encourage intemperance for the sake of revenue? If the tax were stopped, if all these bugbears of hon. gentlemen opposite were put an end to, the result would only be that the natives of India would consume untaxed liquor, and that liquor would be manufactured to an immense amount in the country where the flowers and the trees and the very stalks furnished material for alcoholic liquor. The hon. member for Barrow had declared that the out-still system was in full force in Bengal. When he was Governor of Bengal he would have none of them; and the same policy was followed by his predecessor, the hon. member for Kirkcaldy. This was up to 1877. But after them a new Pharaoh came. He had passed beyond the region of human censure and could not answer for himself. He would therefore endeavour in the fewest possible words to state what the thought would have been the views of this gentleman had he been now present. He believed the views of this official would have been stated to this effect—that the manner in which the out-still system had been suppressed by him (Sir R. Temple) and his predecessor would tend to encourage or permit illicit manufacture, and therefore he was bound not only for the sake of the revenue, but in the interest of suppressing those malpractices, to open out a number of out-stills. This was about 1879. For his part, he believed this was a mistaken idea, and that some harm was done in consequence. He must explain for a moment how the out-still system worked. The Excise used to be managed by farmers or contractors. These became automatically a Vigilance Executive for preventing illicit practices; so far, well. But then they had an interest in the encouragement of drinking—so they had to be discontinued. In substitution a Central Distillery was licensed in each district. But in the outlying parts of the district, no licensed distillery being at hand, great care was needed to prevent temptation arising from illicit practices. Hence it was argued by some that unless we could allow the people of India to get liquor, lawfully and reasonably, they would employ the abundant means nature had placed at their disposal to manufacture liquor for themselves. That was the argument for out-stills; but, sharing the fear expressed by hon. gentlemen opposite, he and his friends had always set their faces against the system.

When this system was practically resuscitated in Bengal, the action of public opinion on the Government of Bengal began subsequently to be felt. The rectification of the system began and went steadily on, and in the course of three or four years a Commission was appointed. The report of that body had been referred to in the course of the debate; but since 1884, when it was issued, many things had happened, among them the gradual suppression

of out-stills. That mistake had now been almost entirely rectified. With regard to the people of India generally, he pointed out that there had been undoubtedly an increase of late years in the Excise revenue. That increase, however, was largely due to the enhancement in the price of liquor owing to the Excise system. Whatever increase there might be in the consumption of liquor it was mainly due to the prosperity of the people and the increase in the population of the country. In the United Kingdom, whenever the labouring classes were prosperous the Excise Revenue rose, and India was no exception to the rule.

But drinking was no new practice among the people of India. If there was any practice of immemorial antiquity connected with the Indian people, it was that of drinking. The ancient Vedic writings teemed with allusions to the practice. All their history, ancient, mediæval, and modern, was full of similar allusions. In fact, certain classes of natives had always drunk, still drank, and would continue to drink to the end of the chapter, until human nature changed, or until the admonitions of temperance apostles reached their ears. In justice to the people of India, it must be said that in the main they were a wonderfully temperate people. It was quite true that it was in the towns, and not in the country that the drinking practices existed most. The rural population was temperate to a degree unknown in northern latitudes. There were, however, certain wild tribes living in the forests and mountains who were undoubtedly addicted to drinking; and it was difficult to introduce a system which would check that consumption by taxation and yet avoid offering temptations to intemperance. It was the old story of sailing between Scylla and Charybdis, and it required great care on the part of the Government to steer the vessel of Administration between the opposing rocks. The hon. member for Barrow spoke of the Mahomedans as if they were bound by the practices as well as the dictates of their religion to be total abstainers. When he heard that statement made by the hon. member he at once said "No" to it.

The hon. member seemed to be a little surprised at the interruption; but in support of his contention he would read one or two racy sentences from a recent publication on the subject in order to give the House an idea of the prevailing sentiment of Mahomedans on the subject. Although the Prophet of the Mahomedan religion forbade indulgence in wine drinking, the prohibition had never been strictly observed by any race except the Arab of Arabia. The Persians were notoriously wine-bibbers, and the poetic literature of Persia was steeped with references to love and wine. That is the popular literature among the cultured Mahomedans of India to-day. In a publication prepared by one of the most learned and accomplished officers, now retired, in the service of India, and who was a hearty advocate of temperance, this passage occurred:—

"It appears from a Mahomedan history that the King said to his Minister, 'Shall we drink a little wine?' Accordingly much wine was brought in. The King said, 'Let us drink fair measure and fill the cup evenly, in order that there may be no unfairness.'"

That was exactly the sentiment of Sairey Gamp to Betsy Prigg—"Whatever you do, be perfectly fair." One Sultan in India plunges into dissipation, and all ranks acquired a taste for wine-drinking. Another Sultan in India is of the same mind with hon. Members opposite, and enacts total prohibition. But "the dissolute distil wine clandestinely, put it in leather bags, and convey it concealed in hay and firewood." Baber, one of the great Emperors of India, wrote of himself:—"I now want something less than one year of forty years, and I drink wine most copiously." With regard to the Mahomedans of to-day Canon Taylor writes:—"Has Islam abolished drunkenness? Why, night after night we took up dozens of drunkards in Zanzibar." The celebrated poet Hafiz told us how his spiritual guide went from the mosque to

the wineshop. It would be seen, therefore, that the idea of the Mahomedans being taught to drink by us was an absurdity. Still he repeated that India on the whole was a land of temperance. If the average expenditure in this respect of the Indian people were compared with that of the people of England, it would be admitted that we were not in a position to throw stones. Take one large fact. For the United Kingdom we had an Excise Revenue of £25,000,000 to a population of 37,000,000. In India we had an Excise Revenue of only £4,000,000 to a population of 200,000,000—in British territories proper, exclusive of Native States. He hoped that, on realising this fact, hon. Members who had raised the question would go home and sleep more soundly on account of the consolation to be derived from the comparison.

Mr. BRYCE said they were all indebted to his hon. friend for an interesting debate. In connection with the subject of the Indian liquor traffic, he wished to lay before the House some facts relating to the recent action of the Government of India with regard to the liquor traffic in Upper Burmah. Under the native monarchs the use of opium and of ardent spirits was prohibited in accordance with the precepts of Buddhism, and nothing was more rare than to see a drunken person in the street. The few Chinese who were under native jurisdiction were allowed to smoke opium and consume liquor, but the prohibition was strictly enforced in the case of the Burmese themselves, and practically there was no consumption of liquor nor of opium before we annexed the country. After the annexation in 1886 it was found that money was wanted, and the idea seemed to have occurred to the British officials of introducing the system of licensing the sale of spirits and granting a monopoly of opium. The officers in charge of districts in Upper Burmah were consulted by the Government, and he had been informed on good authority, that they returned answers adverse to the proposal. He had been told that the native view was also strongly opposed to the plan. This took place early last year, and as far back as April last, in spite of the advice given by the Commissions, a certain number of licenses were issued for the sale of spirits and opium. In July last he addressed questions to the Under Secretary for India on the subject, but could obtain little information, because the India Office did not itself know what was going on. Returns on the subject ordered by the House last August. Recently he addressed some questions further relating to this matter to the hon. member the Under-Secretary of State for India, who, however, did not appear to have received any additional information. On the whole it seemed as if the officials in India wanted to keep the India Office here, as well as the House of Commons, in the dark in regard to this subject. It was said that these licenses were to be granted in order to regulate the traffic, but it did not seem to him that the Under-Secretary for India had met the case presented by the hon. member for Barrow. It was always said that the licenses were intended to diminish the consumption, but how came it that under the license system consumption increased? It appeared to him that in Upper Burmah, at any rate, it was the pressure of the cost of administration and the desire to relieve the Central Government of India which led to the expedient of granting licenses being resorted to. It would be said that the sale could not be altogether prevented, because there were some Chinese in Burmah, who used both spirits and opium. But the Chinese were confined to a few towns, such as Mandalay and Bhanco, whereas these licenses were being granted for districts inhabited by a purely Burmese population. He had heard of districts where no Chinaman had been seen, except one or two who came to enquire about the licenses, because they desired to set up this pernicious trade. We were not without experience as to the result of a license system in these and Chinese countries. It had

produced the worst results in Lower Burmah since we established it there ; it has completely demoralised the province of Aracan. Much had been said of the cruelties and tyranny of the native Kings of Burmah ; but all the harm caused by the massacres and oppression of King Thebaw was not so great as the evil likely to arise from the demoralisation of the people that was likely to be produced by the issuing of these licences. Could anything be more deplorable and he would add disgraceful than that professing to carry civilisation and Christianity to the countries we conquered, we should be implanting vices whose power over our own population had proved so terrible, but which would be even more fatal to these weaker semi-civilised races ? He expressed an earnest hope that hon. members would do their utmost to compel the Government to prevent the traffic both in opium and in spirits from taking root in Upper Burmah.

SIR J. FERGUSSON said he would have been glad to be saved the necessity for reverting to the Excise question, but he was compelled to notice the remarks of the hon. and learned member for Aberdeen, who had somewhat unjustly referred to the measures of the Government of India with respect to Burmah.

The Under-Secretary of State had not been able to inform the House fully as to the licences to be given in Burmah, and he might add that the Government of India had given stringent orders that no opium licences were to be given in Burmah, except in parts where there was a Chinese population. There was a distinct difference between the encouragement and the regulation of the sale of liquor. It was only a question whether the sale of opium and liquor should be under regulation or not. Therefore, giving licences to places where there were people other than Burmans, Europeans, Indians, and Chinese who used liquors and opium was not, as had been represented, encouraging the Burmans to practices from which they were happily free. But he had more personal knowledge of this matter as far as Bombay was concerned, and in that Presidency he could answer for it that the object of the administration had been not to stimulate but to limit and control the use of intoxicating liquors. The hon. member for Flintshire had quoted from a pamphlet on India which had been issued in his name, in which the writer quoted an official despatch purporting to come from the Government of Bombay to the Secretary of State, in which it was questioned whether the temperance movement should be permitted to spread. The papers before Parliament showed that the expressions attributed to the Government of Bombay were from a report of the Acting Commissioner of Customs to the Chief Secretary. In opposition to the views put forward in that pamphlet, he would point out that the word "Temperance" was not to be found in the report, for it was not a temperance movement, but a strike against the high rate of licences on liquor and spirits imposed by the Government of Bombay. Those interested in the profits from the sale of liquor at a cheaper rate, disliking the high rate of duty, had intimidated people into refusing to use spirits. Hon. members who spent a month in India should be cautious in taking up ideas and believing stories against Englishmen who were administering the affairs of the country under very great difficulties, and, he believed, with a high sense of duty and every desire to ameliorate the condition of the people. To his personal knowledge they had accomplished often with very scanty means a great deal in the cause of the amelioration of the condition of the people of India, and he would ask the House to reject the motion of the hon. member for Burnley.

## SCHEDULE A.

Table from page 7 of Paper No. 166, issued by the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India.

Years.	Tracts supplied with Liquor from the Distillery at Ahmedabad.	Population of Tracts supplied.	Number of Gallons of Spirits issued from Distillery.	Rate of Duty per Gallon.
1872-3	{ Ahmedabad city and cantonment, and three miles round }	118,756	30,281	Rs. As. 1 0
1873-4	do.	do.	30,787	1 0
1874-5	do.	do.	32,209	1 1
1875-6	do.	do.	38,662	1 1
1876-7	do.	do.	37,650	1 1
1877-8	do.	do.	33,926	1 1
1878-9	do.	do.	21,480	2 0
1879-80	do.	do.	23,286	2 0
1880-1	do.	do.	27,427	2 0
1881-2	The whole of the district	856,324	46,514	2 0
*				
1882-3	do.	do.	48,000	2 0
1883-4	do.	do.	48,000	2 0
1884-5	do.	do.	57,000	2 0
1885-6	do.	do.	63,000	2 0

\* Here the Government Table stops—the remaining figures are added from the Government returns for each year.

## SCHEDULE B.

Table shewing quantities of Spirit consumed in the Island of Bombay, from 1872 to 1886.

Year.	Number of Gallons.	Duty per Gallon on Mowra Spirit.	Rate of Tax per annum on Toddy Trees.
1872-3	907,445	Rs. As. 1 0	Rs. 6
1873-4	884,096	1 0	6
1874-5	892,187	1 0	6 & 7
1875-6	979,295	1 0	7
1876-7	566,482	1 12	9
1877-8	653,557	{ 1 12	{ 9
1878-9	585,166	2 4	15
1879-80	534,980	2 4	{ 15
1880-1	583,026	2 4	{ 18
1881-2	630,521	2 4	18
1882-3	665,000	2 4	18
1883-4	698,000	2 4	18
1884-5*	548,000	2 12	22
1885-6	592,000	2 12	22

\* In 1884-5 the great Toddy Strike occurred, only 500 trees being tapped instead of 18,000, the number tapped the previous year.

## SCHEDULE C.

Statement shewing quantities of Spirits consumed in the Surat district, from 1872 to 1886.

Years.	Tracts supplied.	Population.	Number of Gallons.	Duty.
				Rs. As.
1872-3	{ Surat city and 6 miles round }	107,149	85,523	1 4
1873-4	do.	do.	89,000	1 4
1874-5	do.	do.	99,000	1 4
1875-6	do.	do.	94,000	1 4
1876-7	do.	do.	96,000	1 4
1877-8	do.	do.	87,000	1 4
1878-9	do.	do.	45,000	2 0
1879-80	Surat, Clurasi & Olpad	221,840	75,000	2 0
1880-1	do.	do.	78,000	2 0
1881-2	Whole Surat district	614,000	182,000	2 0
1882-3	do.	do.	237,000	2 0
1883-4	do.	do.	249,000	2 0
1884-5	do.	do.	305,000	2 0
1885-6	do.	do.	324,000	2 0

The last five years showing an increase of 75% in five years.

## SCHEDULE D.

Consumption of Spirits for the years 1881-6 in the whole Presidency of Bombay.

1881-2	1882-3.	1883-4.	1884-5.	1885-6.
1,982,000	2,454,000	2,671,000	2,301,000	2,607,000

\* During this year the great Toddy Strike was raging, reducing the number of trees tapped for Toddy Spirit from 18,000 in the previous year to about 500.

## SCHEDULE E.

Table shewing Revenue from Excise in the Province of Bengal for 15 years, in Pounds sterling = 10 Rupees.

1871-2. 619,000	1872-3. 664,000	1873-4. 684,000	1874-5. 532,000	1875-6. 578,000	1876-7. 595,000	1877-8. 657,000
1878-9. 675,000	1879-80. 694,000	1880-1. 829,000	1881-2. 910,000	1882-3. 951,000	1883-4. 1,016,000	1884-5. 975,000
1885-6 ... 927,000						

N.B.—This Table shows an increase of 50% in the average revenue of the last seven years compared with the first seven years.

## SCHEDULE F.

Total Excise Revenue from Spirits for all British India for the last five years available for returns, in Pounds sterling=10 Rupees.

1882-3. 3,609,000	1883-4. 3,836,000	1884-5. 4,012,000	1885-6. 4,152,000	1886-1887. 4,266,000
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Shewing a steady and unabating increase in five years of 20%.

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**2003-04.**