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The Prohibition Plebiscite Act This bill, introduced by Mr. Fisher, received its first reading on 21st ult. It provides for submitting the following question to all persons entitled to vote at a Dominion election, and the Governor-General will by proclamation name the day on which the voting shall take place. The question reads:

"Are you in favour of the passing of an Act prohibiting the importation, manufacture or sale of spirits, wine, ale, beer, cider and all other alcoholic liquors for use as beverage?"

Why the country should be put to the expense of preparing ballot papers for the purpose of ascertaining the wishes of a majority of freemen upon the subject of food, drink or clothing is not made clear in the copy of the bill in question. If a majority of those who take the trouble to answer this question should reply in the affirmative, what then?

The New York Tariff Association Crisis. Last week, reference was made to the possible disbandment of the Tariff Association in New York. Several meetings of the executive committee have been held since, and on the 26th ult. a report was adopted which suspends all rates and commissions, save and except rates on contents in congested districts, and on certain enumerated risks outside that district and also breweries. A rate war will begin. There is much diversity of opinion on the merits of the situation; but it seems to be admitted that the troubles of the Association are not due to outside competition. The causes of the crisis are said to be "internal bad faith, a general lack of confidence and the large influx of new capital in the last few months."

Close competition will test the strength and usefulness of any business Association formed for the purpose of inducing individuals to adhere to rules and uniform rates. That the New York Tariff Association should be virtually unable to produce satisfactory proof of deviations by erring members from rules and rates is not surprising.

Any Insurance Tariff or kindred Association is doomed to disruption if the faith and tempers of upright members are shaken and tried by less scrupulous competitors for business.

In the metropolitan districts alone, the companies have been receiving \$10,000,000 yearly in premiums.

What will be the effect of fighting upon these receipts remains to be seen; but peace will probably be declared when insurance men grow weary of transacting business for nothing.

A Canadian Chairman.

One of the most enterprising and energetic citizens of Montreal, Mr. James Ross, presided as chairman of the annual meeting of the Birmingham Tramways. The share-holders of this English company are reported to have unanimously endorsed the negotiations carried on by the company with the Birmingham City Government, having in view extension of the system. A dividend of five per cent. was declared, and \$165,000 carried to the reserve fund of the company. Altogether, the business of the year would seem to have been highly satisfactory to the shareholders, and must have been gratifying to Mr. Ross.

A New Peril.

Attention of insurance companies and policy-holders in the city of Chicago is now being directed to the danger of disintegration of the foundations of the very high buildings by the action of what is called electrolysis.

It having been stated that the destruction of the water pipes in Chicago was caused by electricity, the decay of the steel bars used in the foundation of many sky-scrapers in that city is now attributed to the same cause. An eminent authority states that the action of the waste or returning electricity from the wires or rails of street cars, and the electric light conduits, with their connections leading into each building, produces electrolysis from which follows the rapid disintegration referred to as a new peril for those living in high buildings, situated on lines of railway which use electricity as a motive power.

The question is a sufficiently important one to receive the prompt and patient consideration of fire insurance companies. General Sooy Smith, cited as a high authority in the matter, is reported to have discovered evidence of electrolysis having commenced in one of the highest buildings in the city of Chicago; but he thinks it would not be proper for him to state what structure is thus affected. This prudent resolve of General Smith leaves the inmates of several buildings in an unenviable state of tremor and anxiety. Surely when a building is threatened with electrolysis the owner and tenants should be made aware thereof.