

raw, fiery, and potent, and had the great recommendation of being very cheap.¹ Distilleries were planted broadcast over the land, and drove a roaring trade; distillers must needs have grain and they offered high prices for it, thereby increasing the price while they reduced the supply for purposes of food. There was also a little exportation of grain from the Eastern District to Lower Canada—not enough, however, to be a real peril.

In the second session of the sixth provincial parliament, called by Sir Roger Hale Sheaffe and sitting from February 25 to March 13, 1813, the matter of saving grain was earnestly discussed; and at length an Act was passed authorizing the person administering the government of the province to prohibit the exportation of grain (and other provisions) and to restrain the distillation of spirituous liquors from grain.² The legislation was drastic and, if acted upon, was likely to have an effect which had not been borne in mind by the Administrator and Legislators—it was likely to put an end to distilling altogether, and would thus deprive the troops of their accustomed liquor. No person had yet advanced the proposition that fighting men could get along without alcoholic stimulants, even if some weaklings might be forced, and some hypocrites might pretend to do so. De Rottenburg consulted Robinson,³ telling him of the absolute necessity of distilling whiskey for the soldiers; but Robinson was obliged to advise that “unfortunately the Legislature have put it out of his power, so that he cannot license any particular person to distil for the Government, neither can he do it indirectly in any particular case by remitting the penalty because half of it belongs to the informer.”

On July 24, 1813, Robinson wrote to the General's secretary

¹ My father, the late Walter Riddell, told me that at the first election after his arrival in Upper Canada, the General Election of 1834, at the polling booth at Gore's Landing, Rice Lake, there stood at the door a barrel of whiskey with the head staved in and a tin dipper for all to help themselves. In the late 50's and the early 60's I myself carried a whiskey bottle round to the men in the harvest field, accompanied by a brother with a pail of water in which oatmeal was mixed. It was in the 50's that the part of the province immediately north of Lake Ontario began to feel the effects of the temperance movement, and Lodges of Sons of Temperance and of Good Templars became numerous, with most beneficial effects upon drinking habits.

² The Act is (1813) 53 Geo. III, C. 3 (U.C.). It was temporary, but was renewed for a year by (1814) Geo. III, C. 8 (U.C.), and finally expired March 15, 1815. Another temporary Act prohibiting the sale of spirituous liquor to Indians was passed in 1813, 53 Geo. III, C. 5 (U.C.).

³ John Beverley Robinson to McMahon, York, July 24, 1813.