

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE SCOTT ACT.

MR. EDITOR,—At the present time when the Scott Act is being discussed in so many of the counties of Ontario, it will help the friends of the Act to know the leading objections brought against it by the liquor party during the late campaign in Oxford. To each objection I append a brief reply.

1st. Objection.—*The Dunkin Act did not succeed, and therefore the Scott Act will be a failure.*

Answer, if this conclusion be correct then the liquor party need not fear the Act, and need not put themselves to so much trouble and expense in opposing it. But the conclusion does not follow from the premise unless the two acts are identical. This is far from being the case. The Scott Act was passed by the Dominion Parliament in answer to petitions containing the names of 500,000 men and women, and passed for the very purpose of overcoming the defects of the Dunkin Act.

THE DUNKIN ACT

1. Allowed any person to sell as much liquor as he pleased in quantities not less than five gallons, or one dozen bottles.

2. The penalties were ridiculously small.

3. The Act could be repealed at the end of one year. The rum-sellers therefore put forth every effort to make the Act unpopular during that year, and thus got their business back.

4. The constitutionality of the Dunkin Act was in constant dispute and thus its efficient enforcement was greatly hindered.

THE SCOTT ACT

1. Allows no person to sell by retail or wholesale, for beverage purposes, in the municipality where it is passed.

2. The penalties are adequate—not less than \$50 for the first offence—not less than \$100 for the second offence—imprisonment for each subsequent offence.

3. There is no chance of a repeal within three years and so rum-sellers give up the battle and either adapt themselves to the law or go into some better business.

4. The constitutionality of the Scott Act has been put beyond all doubt by the highest court of appeal in the British realm, viz. the Privy Council of England.

2nd objection.—*The Scott Act is not a success in Halton county, or in the Lower Provinces.*

Answer. As to Halton we have in writing the testimony of about 150 of the leading men in the county, including the sheriff, jailer, turnkey, police magistrate, both members of Parliament, clergymen, farmers, public school inspector, teachers, manufacturers, and mechanics. After an experience of twenty-two months of the Act, these all declare, that it has not injured business; that it has greatly reduced drinking, and that it is becoming more and more popular, and they strongly recommend other counties to adopt it.

As to the Lower Provinces, the people there are the best judges, and that they are well pleased with it is evident from the fact that county after county has gone on adopting it, until now it is in force in more than one half of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and in the whole of Prince Edward Island. It has been submitted in forty municipalities, and carried in thirty four; and the total majority in its favour is 22,155. The city of Fredericton, N.B., after a trial of three years, sustained the Act. Prince County, P.E.I., after a trial of three years, on a second vote, gave the Act the grand majority of 1,874 in its favour. Does that look as if the people there thought the Act a failure? Never in any instance has the Scott Act been repealed.

3rd objection.—*The Scott Act will ruin business.*

Answer. We have the testimony of the leading business men of Halton County (already quoted), and of other places, to the contrary. People will need food, clothes, houses, beds, stoves, furniture, etc., etc., as much after the passing of the Scott Act as before, and they will come where they can get these things to buy; and many who now drink all their earnings will then be able to invest their money in food, clothes, etc., for themselves and families.

4th objection.—*The Scott Act will increase the taxes.*

Answer. Taxes are gathered from accumulated property. The man who accumulates most property pays most taxes. The bar room makes idlers and non-producers—they do not earn, do not save, and so do not become tax payers for the community. The bar-rooms cause pauperism. Who takes care of this?

The tax-payer. The bar-rooms cause crime—the best authorities say three fourths of all the crime in our land. For the detection and punishment of crime the tax-payer must pay. Who keeps the rum-sellers? There are eighty of them in the county of Oxford. They produce nothing of any value to society. No grain, shoes, clothes, etc., are made by them. Minds are not made more intelligent, or hearts more pure by them. They give out nothing useful in exchange for the money they take in, as do merchants, grocers, tailors, etc.; and yet each one of the eighty takes in on an average \$2,000 a year over the bar: $\$2,000 \times 80 = \$160,000$. Where does this come from? Out of the tax-payers of the county. Rum-sellers live upon the industry and lives of others, and they add to the wealth of a community only as the spider adds to the prosperity of a group of flies. We can refer to Fredericton, N.B.; Maine, U.S.; and Vineland, New Jersey, to prove that the prohibition of the liquor traffic always decreases taxes. "Give me," said W. E. Gladstone, Premier of England, "Give me a sober population, not wasting their earnings, and I will know where to obtain the revenue."

5th objection.—*The Scott Act will deprecate the value of tavern property.*

This is the cry of Demetrius of old: "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth our craft is in danger." (Acts xix. 24-27.) But, notwithstanding the money loss to Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen, the cause of God and humanity went on, and so it must be now. Human happiness for time and eternity are of more value than money. Prohibition has not been suddenly sprung upon these persons. For forty years public opinion has been gradually acquiring strength against this traffic. Liquor-dealers have been constantly reminded that the days of their traffic were numbered; but at all this they affected to sneer, and, with a full knowledge of all the risk, they invested their money in the business, simply because of the enormous profits connected with it. Instead of taking timely warning, they have gone on building new taverns, banding together, publishing newspapers, collecting enormous sums of money, hiring agents and lecturers, and keeping at work a complete machinery, all, as they say themselves, "to oppose the temperance fanatics;" and then they coolly turn round to these temperance fanatics and say: "Give us back our money, pay us for our bar-rooms, breweries, and distilleries." Gentlemen, it won't do, as you have made your bed you must lie in it.

7th objection.—*The Scott Act will prevent the farmer making or selling cider.*

Answer. The Scott Act allows any one to make all the cider he chooses, use all the cider he chooses, keep all the cider he chooses, give it to his friends if he chooses, and sell it before fermentation if he chooses. The Scott Act prohibits nothing but the sale of what is intoxicating. Cider, as made by the farmers, and sold before fermentation, does not come under the head of intoxicating liquors. (See Act, page 5, sec. 2.) It is refreshing to observe how solicitous the rum-sellers are at the present time, for the farmer and his cider! How brave they are to skulk behind the cover of the cider barrel and disown their beer, whiskey, gin, and rum, which they alone sell and depend on for their gain!

More anon, if time permits.

W. A. MCKAY.

Woodstock, May 20, 1884.

PRESBYTERIAN PUBLISHING HOUSE.

MR. EDITOR,—My attention has been recently directed by a friend to the question discussed in THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN, November 28th, 1883, and January 2nd, 1884; "Should we have a Presbyterian Publishing House?"

This the writer discusses at considerable length, and answers it affirmatively, with reasons. The main object which he has in view is one of which all the members of our Church must approve. It is to enable the Church to have its publishing of periodicals, of minutes of Church courts, etc., done not only more cheaply than at present, but in such a way as ever to raise a revenue which may help other schemes of usefulness; to encourage and help competent men in our Church to become authors, so that the Church may foster native talent and have a literature of her own; and above all, to diffuse abundance of invigorating and edifying religious information under the auspices of the Church, and in harmony with her doc-

trines and polity. The end aimed at is most desirable; my only doubt is in reference to the proposed means of reaching it.

1. The establishing of a publishing house would necessitate the erection of a Board of Publication. This, of course, would increase our Church machinery which is already much complained of as too elaborate and burdensome. Besides, I question the propriety of having the Church enter upon any branch of secular business. If the Church is to become a publisher and a bookseller, and that even partially for the sake of raising a revenue, why may she not also deal in hardware, dry-goods, and groceries? There are many members of our Church engaged in publishing and selling books, why should we enter into competition with them alone? Moreover, I believe that the Church, far from deriving a revenue from publication, would be involved in debt for many years to come. If I mistake not, the Methodist Book concern was for many years carried on at a loss. And it is well known that the Presbyterian board of Philadelphia required—and for aught I know, still requires—contributions from the congregations of the Church. And even although thus maintained, it could not compete successfully in matter, workmanship, and cheapness, with Carter and other publishers. I confess, I do not like monopolies of any kind, and hope that our Church will not erect one. Let our publication of minutes of Assembly, reports, etc., be thrown open, if need be, to competition by the trade, and there is no doubt it will be done better and more cheaply than the Church could do it.*

2. I admit the desirableness of encouraging our ministers to become authors, and thus fostering a literature of our own; but I question the suitableness of the method proposed to secure this. It will not conduce to literary excellence to free writers from all anxiety, and all pecuniary liability and risk. The very risk is a necessary and healthful stimulus. It is well that a writer should feel that he must endeavour to produce a work that shall compete successfully with similar works produced by private enterprise; and that he must produce a work that will be read with interest and profit, and thus command a ready and extensive sale. A man in these circumstances will do his very best; and he will, if he succeed, feel that he owes his success to his own ability and exertion and not the fostering care and patronage of a board. A man of genuine ability, scholarship and literary ambition desires only an open field and no favour. Besides, a Board of Publication is not likely to be an impartial and independent judge of literary merit and usefulness. Members will naturally be partial to their own friends, to persons who have acquired position in the Church, and to pastors whose congregations make liberal donations or purchase largely the board's publications. These considerations could not fail to bias the judgment of the Board, and thus render it incapable of estimating impartially the value and usefulness of a work, whereas a publisher is compelled to form a correct judgment of any work offered to him for publication. If he fail to do so, it will be ruinous to his business. There are publishers in our own communion who would gladly share with an author the risk attached in publishing a work, if they consider it one of real merit. It seems clear that a literature fostered by a Church board and dependent on its approval, will be of an inferior order, and will naturally deteriorate, and instead of being a help will be a hindrance to the Church. In course of time, men of high attainments and real ability, will, for the sake of their own credit and interest, decline the good offices of the board and deal with independent publishers. It is to be regretted that our Church has very little literature of its own. But this is largely due to the circumstances in which the Church has been placed in a new country and with a large amount of pioneer missionary work. Its time of literary activity has not yet fully come; and it may do more harm than good to stimulate prematurely its productive power in this sphere.

I admit the importance of diffusing sound religious instruction, and that of a Presbyterian complexion throughout the Church, and of sending religious pamphlets to the remote settlements. But surely this can be done without a Board of Publication and a Publishing House. There is plenty of Presbyterian literature in the world, which can be purchased cheaper than we can create and publish it. We may have the cream of the publications of the Presbyterian

*[This is the course that has been and is still pursued.—ED. C. P.]