

THE CANADA CITIZEN

AND TEMPERANCE HERALD

Freedom for the Right Means Suppression of the Wrong.

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TORONTO, FRIDAY, JULY 18th, 1884.

This number is sent to many friends whose names are not yet on our subscription list. Will they kindly aid our enterprise by forwarding their dollars and addresses? It is desirable to subscribe early, as we propose making every number well worth preserving for future reference and use.

A PLEBISCITE.

A resolution was adopted by the Toronto conference of the Methodist Church in favor of having provision made for a test of public sentiment, at the next general Parliamentary election, on the question of Prohibition. The proposal, if we understand rightly, is that the regular election ballot should have in it an extra space, so arranged and described that the elector by a mark therein could indicate whether or not he favored a prohibitory law. The same suggestion was discussed and warmly approved of by the Grand Lodge of Good Templars of Ontario at its recent session.

The Dominion Parliament at its last session affirmed that it was prepared to give us a law of total prohibition "as soon as public opinion will sufficiently sustain a stringent measure." In the United States such a question as this can be dealt with by the machinery provided for amending State constitutions. An amendment must be adopted by the Legislature and ratified by a popular vote before it can take effect. Hence legislators can be certain that popular sentiment will not be in opposition to the amendments made, and they can act without fear of having afterwards to enforce what is strongly against the wishes of the people. In Canada we have no such provisions, no machinery for giving our people a direct voice in either constitution or statute, and our legislators tell us that they must therefore be the more careful, being the

more in danger of going ahead of public opinion and making better laws than their constituents want, something which modern politicians seem to sorely dread.

It is not intended that the proposed plebiscite should have any legal value. It would merely be an agency through which Parliament could ascertain what the country wants, and would be specially valuable to some of our law-makers who are willing to do their duty provided they be assured that such doing will not cost them their seats or interfere with the interests of their respective parties. We may expect to have it strongly advocated by many politicians who see that Prohibition is a coming question, and who would rather have it settled in any other way than have it come up for consideration in reference to their personal elections. These men are also wise enough to see that the better class of the community is beginning to get impatient of the indifference shown towards a matter of the most intense and vital importance to our country's welfare, and they see, in the near future, unless something is speedily done to avert the awful catastrophe, the disturbing political element of a

CANADIAN PROHIBITION PARTY.

We may also expect to hear this plebiscite proposal warmly espoused by temperance men who believe that by it we would obtain—as we undoubtedly would—such an overwhelming expression of public condemnation of the drink system as our legislation would not dare to ignore, and who believe that this would be an important advance-step in the onward march of our cause.

We agree with all this, and we would advocate the same proposal were it not for the certain knowledge that this advance step will have been taken long before another general election comes on, that our parliament will soon have an unmistakable announcement of the sentiment of the whole province of Ontario, and probably of the greater part of the Dominion, and that there will be absolutely no valid excuses for the delay that such a plan would involve. Of the thirty-eight counties of Ontario, there are only seven in which Scott Act agitation has not already commenced. We hope to see every constituency in the province polled before the present campaign is ended, and the campaign is not going to take us very long. Other provinces have already done nobly, and others are rapidly coming into line. Parliament gave us the Scott Act, when we asked for total prohibition, and we accepted it, not only because we believed it was inherently good, but because it would enable us to show whether or not the people are in favor of prohibition. It was given and accepted on this understanding, we are using it for this purpose, and the verdict that it is enabling us to record must not be ignored. We must not be asked to go over the ground again, especially when that verdict is so unmistakable and strong. Our majorities are becoming more and more overwhelming as we go on, and already (notwithstanding the technical difficulties that beset us at first, and they have all been overcome) the aggregate vote stands.

For the Scott Act	49,103
Against "	26,944

Majority in favor of prohibition22,159

HALTON.

A great deal has been said and written by anti-Scott advocates about the petition purporting to be a prayer for a vote on the ques-