

ing the issue for renewal of licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors may be placed in the hands of persons most deeply interested and affected, namely, the inhabitants themselves."

The system which we have had in the Province of Quebec has worked well, so that there have been no complaints against it; and since we have been dealing with this matter in this House I have received a great many letters from different portions of the Province of Quebec, and they all say that if in the legislation which we are now proposing there is no disposition to give to a majority in the municipalities or to the local councils the right of prohibition, it will be the most unhappy law which was ever enacted for the Province of Quebec. Public sentiment in the Province of Quebec is strongly in favor of the Bill just as it has been reported by the Committee. At a meeting of grocers held in the city of Montreal, when one of the grocers of Toronto tried to urge those who were present to get the French members to vote against this Bill, the Secretary of this meeting, who is a grocer himself, said he was sure that the great majority of the Province of Quebec were in favor of the Bill as reported, and that the members who would vote against this Bill would have great difficulty in being elected again. This local option may not have worked well elsewhere, but in our Province it has worked exceedingly well. During the discussion on the Local Option Bill in the English House of Commons, Mr. Hill a member of that House, spoke of the Province of Quebec. He said:

"A few words with reference to the condition of things in countries where prohibition existed might guide the House in coming to a conclusion as to what the effect of the resolution of the hon. Baronet would be if it became law in this country. The first place he would mention was in North America, where, after going up the St. Lawrence and crossing the Charles River, they would in proceeding shortly pass through the parish or town of Beauport, where the old inhabitants of French extraction were completely under the influence of the clergy. The priests have brought their influence to bear so strongly that not only was no intoxicant of any kind sold there but none was kept by any person. All were agreed to banish it; and throughout the length and breadth of either the Eastern or Western hemisphere not a better conducted, more happy, or more moral set of persons could be found than they were."

This is true, and I am happy to say, that in a great many parishes and counties in the Province of Quebec the greatest sobriety prevails, and the population of those parishes are very happy. But I may say, that if you have not local option, if our parishes and municipal councils have not the right of prohibiting the sale of liquors, then the inhabitants of those parishes may bid adieu to that happiness which they have enjoyed heretofore; and if drunkenness prevails in those parishes they will have just reason to make strong complaint against the legislators who have enacted such legislation as to force liquor shops and public-houses upon the municipalities, against the wishes of the majority of the electors. The House must remember, that in the Province of Quebec we have only about 1,300 tavern licenses, while in the Province of Ontario they have more than 3,100 licenses, which is a proof that in a great many parishes we have no licenses as the result of local option. We know that the best license law which was ever enacted, according to authors who have dealt with this subject, is the one enacted in Sweden. We know that in Sweden drunkenness was prevailing to the highest degree, and the people appealed to their legislators, and asked them to adopt such legislation as would lessen the evils of intemperance. One of the Kings of Sweden said that he would give the finest jewels of his crown to any legislator who would find some means of lessening the evils of intemperance. The Legislature began to study that question, and the result was that in 1855 the License Act of that country was adopted. What has been the result?

"As already stated, the Act allowed of local prohibition; and under it the traffic in spirits was not licensed at all in certain parishes, and greatly restricted in others."

The British Consul, in a letter to Mr. Gladstone, says:

"So vigorously have the people outside of towns, used their permission to limit and prohibit, that among 3,500,000 there are only 450 places for the sale of spirits."

Further on he says:

"The social condition of Sweden, as in Scotland, England and Ireland, and indeed everywhere else, proves that just in proportion as you limit the number of houses for the sale of intoxicating liquors you improve the morality and social well-being of the district; and in like manner as you multiply the facilities for drinking, you increase drunkenness with its never failing attendants of crime, beggary, and irreligion."

He states further:

"One result of the passing of this Act was the reduction of the number of distilleries from 44,000 in 1850, to 4,500; and with the aid of auxiliary legislation to 457 in 1869, and a reduction of the annual product from 26,000,000 to 6,900,000 gallons."

In Ontario, the Crooks Act was adopted, and according to the report of the License Commissioners, I see that under that Act the number of licenses in 1874, under the old law, was 6,185, and which been reduced under the operation of that Act by 2,247. I find also that the consumption of spirits was also reduced, there having been consumed in 1874, 4,566,609 Imperial gallons, and in 1876, after the number of licenses had been reduced by more than 2,000, there was a consumption of only 3,441,125 Imperial gallons—a reduction of more than 1,125,384. Some persons may say that there was a crisis in 1876, but we had good times during 1879, 1880, 1881, 1882, and yet during any one of these years there was a reduction in the consumption of spirits, compared with the year 1874, by more than 1,000,000 Imperial gallons. So that we see that legislation may have a good effect, and consequently we should have the greatest interest in adopting a law which would tend to reduce the number of licenses, and consequently, to reduce the consumption of liquors. When we go electioneering, we always tell the electors that they are very intelligent and well acquainted with the administration of the affairs of the country. With what face shall we meet the electors if we say here that we cannot trust them even in the matter of granting a hotel or saloon license? Now, I say that the question is one of the most important which has been discussed in this House. It is far more important than the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway or any other question which we have dealt with; and I am sure, if we adopt a License Act at this Session, without inserting a local option clause, it will be one of the most unpopular measures which could be enacted, at all events in the Province of Quebec. I think we should deal with the matter in a very serious manner. We say that we wish to promote temperance; we say that we wish to pass legislation which will render the homes of our countrymen more happy and comfortable. If we wish to do so, we must be taught by the experience of other countries; and when, in everything else, we recognize the right of consulting the people, we should try in this Dominion the same legislation that has produced so much good elsewhere.

Mr. BLAKE. I am very glad, Sir, that this poor little legislative waif and stray, this little bantling, which has been disowned by all its putative fathers, is to receive the support of my hon. friend, while those who ought to be its natural guardians are prepared to cast it out upon the world. The hon. member for Rouville (Mr. Gigault) has told us why he proposes his alternative. It was not that he was dissatisfied with the clause; but he thought he would get more support for this long parable than he would for three or four sections in the Bill. I think he is mistaken. I think the hon. gentlemen who found fault with his clause were gentlemen who did not want local option at all; and the objection is often made in the same way to the form in order to get at the substance. We have already agreed to the principle of the hon. gentleman's amendment. We