

PROHIBITION.



FORMER minister of finance, aided by the statistics at his disposal, in 1884 made the statement that the total direct cost to Canada for liquor, from 1868 to 1882, would not only have defrayed our cost of government, and built our railways, but would have left us without a shadow of national debt. He pointed out that, to this direct loss, we must add the incalculable cost of citizens slain, labor destroyed, pauperism borne, and crime watched, restrained and punished.

Mr. Gladstone has said of the liquor traffic that, "it is the measure of England's discredit and disgrace." Cardinal Manning, that it is responsible "for 75% of the crimes committed; causing the disastrous ruination of families, and destroying domestic life, together with the practice of religion and the education of children." Sir Oliver Mowat, that "three-fourths of the vice that prevails at present, of the lunacy, the idiocy, the poverty and misery of every kind, was owing to the foul vice—intemperance."

But the testimony of the great leaders of thought is unnecessary. All are sufficiently familiar with its ravages to know that it is the greatest source of moral, social, and material evils. And these are only the visible evils. The invisible results of this vice—the pain, the shame, the suffering, the death not only of body, but of soul are things not numerically calculable and known only to Him "whose piercing eye seeth all things." The remedy must be proportionate to the disease. Time has proven that this moral pestilence cannot be stayed in its onward course by any opiate potion of license law.

But what remedy is proportionate to the disease? The opponents of prohibition argue that it is wrong in principle, and ineffective in operation. If so, it has no claim to consideration.

It is said to be wrong in principle, because it is an infringement upon the rights of the individual. The common good, rather than the rights of the individual, is the criterion of the justice of legislation. As a member of society, the individual must make sacrifices that would not be demanded of him were he in a state of isolation. This is a principle universally recognized. Then, are the interests of society better served by giving to this iniquitous traffic the sanction of the law, or by refusing this sanction? Considering only the principle, the answer is not far to seek.