

are about to discuss, a question than which no more important one can on its merits call for the attention of a representative Assembly; and because of the fact that for the first time in the history of responsible Government, according to our British system on this continent, and indeed elsewhere as far as my knowledge serves me, it is proposed by responsible Ministers of the Crown, deliberately to abdicate their functions and refuse and repudiate the responsibility which up to the present day has been not only acknowledged and admitted, but cheerfully accepted by hon. gentlemen in their position here and elsewhere under British rule. The circumstances surrounding this question have been and are of a peculiar nature, not only with reference to the purposes of the bill, and to the hon. gentleman who was responsible for the proposed legislation, but also for the peculiar and unusual nature of the methods by which the question is to be decided. It is not often that a political leader has become identified in a personal sense, and practically for a generation, with an important public question, having regard to the merits of the question and latterly to pledges and promises made by himself and by others whose political assignee and successor he is.

MR. ROSS' RECORD IN DODGING PROHIBITION.

It may be well, therefore, to trace as rapidly as may be the connection of the Hon. Leader of the Government and his Party with this question of abating or abolishing the drink evil in this country. During his whole public and political career, indeed for upwards of thirty years the hon. gentleman has had at his back the great bulk of those who believe in drastic measures with relation to this question. We cheerfully admit him to be the possessor of talents above the average, which, in the ordinary course of events would have assured to him the attainment of a high position in public life in this country; but, sir, he, for the reasons I have given, rode on the crest of the wave for many years with reference to this question. In order not to be misunderstood, let me say here in my opinion the hon. gentleman deserves credit for his early efforts in the direction I have indicated, and credit which I am quite willing to accord him. Now, sir, let us go back, if you please to the year 1877. My hon. friend had then been for a number of years in public life, a trusted representative of his party, a valued representative of his party in the House of Commons; one who had received the strong support of the class in this community of ours which I have alluded to just now, and by means of that support had had his way made easy to the realization of his hopes and desires, namely a seat in the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada. My hon. friend's party was in power, a large majority sat there to the right of the Speaker, prepared to support the Government of the day; the situation was a very desirable one from the point of view of any great moral question, and one would have taken that opportunity at any rate, to have made use of the abilities which had been given to him in order to pay back to the people who had put him there something, at least, of the debt which he owed to them, and of which I am sure he will not to-day deny the existence. But, what occurred in 1877 in the House of Commons at Ottawa? At that time the Hon. Dr. Schultz, a member of that House, proposed the following resolution:

That in the opinion of this House a prohibitory liquor law is the only effectual remedy for the evil of intemperance, and that it is the duty of the Government to submit such a measure at the earliest moment practicable.

Now, sir, I believe, as far as my recollection goes that that resolution expressed in as few words and in as curt and clear a manner the object which its promoter had in view as it was possible to have done by means of any resolution in our English language. I have yet to learn, sir, that while there are many people who believed in the past and who may believe to-day, that