

will not feel the responsibility resting upon them of carrying out the intention generally expressed. That is one of the chief reasons why the strong prohibitionists of this country are opposed to the referendum. There is this further danger, that if once you get this Parliament in the habit of sending back to the people any question which vexes it, you make that habit a custom, until you take away the strong power of representative institutions, by weakening their responsibility and making it possible for men, with the best intentions, whenever any question comes up which promises to be troublesome, to just refer it to the people and ask their advice upon it in their general capacity. These are the reasons for and against these two methods, and I do not hesitate to say to-night which of these I prefer. I believe in the old constitutional methods. I believe in the votes, from their places in this House, of the representatives of the people. I believe in the responsibility of the people's representatives here on the floor of Parliament; but I do not say that circumstances may not arise with reference to this question, which stands to a certain extent in a different position from others, which may render it necessary that, some time or other, it should go direct to the people; but if that practice is adopted in the country, it will bring many evil effects in its train. I wish for one moment to notice some mean insinuations that have been thrown across the floor to-night, that once I was a prohibitionist and temperance man, and that now I am not, and that the reason is that I now get seven thousand dollars salary a year. If any gentleman has the pleasure and the anxiety of holding a seat on the Treasury benches and goes through his work fairly and well, he will find that at the end of each year that he has had as many clothes as he can wear, and as much food as he can eat, and the chance to do as much work in one year as in any other capacity he would attempt to do in five, and that is about the sum and substance of it. It is not worth while for me to repel that insinuation. I do not propose to lower myself by doing so, but while on this point I wish to refer to another matter. The *Montreal Witness* is a temperance prohibitionist paper, and the Dominion Alliance is a temperance reform body, representative to a certain extent. But when the *Witness* proposes, as it did a few days ago, to say to a member of Parliament: "I have my eye on you. This is a resolution which I put in the hands of the hon. member for North Lanark, and I am going to watch every man, and every man who does not vote for that resolution I am going to mark as opposed to prohibition." Well, I believe in every man having his own opinion, as I believe in the *Witness* having its own opinion, but the time has not yet come when I, occupying a seat in this Parliament, propose to put my conscience and my judgment in the keeping of any paper or set of men. I propose to do what is honest and fair on this question, and I will make an honest confession before this House to-night. The only inconsistency which has been urged against me is that on one occasion I voted for immediate prohibition when Mr. Robertson, of Shelburne, brought that up as an amendment. I did it, and I did it in a moment of weakness. I did it, not because I was convinced that the country was then ready for immediate prohibition, but because I felt that the lash was raised outside of that criticism.

Mr. FOSTER.

and that anathema which would be hurled against me if I did not vote for immediate prohibition, and I voted for it. There is my candid confession. Take it, and make what you please of it; but from this time forth I propose to do what I consider to be right and honest, and I will do nothing further and nothing less. Now, after having made these few gentle and unemphatic remarks, allow me to state my position at the present time and what I am in favour of to-day. We never can have too much information. My hon. friend from North Lanark (Mr. Jamieson) does not believe that the whitest and strongest light that can be thrown on this question can be too white or too strong for it. The man in this House who is not a temperance advocate, and has not read widely and studied deeply in regard to this subject, and it is not to the discredit of any one that he has not done so, if he proposes to deal honestly with this question as I know members on this side of the House intend to deal, must come to the conclusion that it is time to stop playing with the prohibition question, that members must make up their minds in regard to the facts of the case, in regard to what course is to be followed, must then say what they will do and must do what they say. In order to do that, we need the fullest information. In 1872 and 1873, there were very large petitions presented to each House of this Parliament. It is a mistake, I think, to say that the petitions laid upon the Table of the House this session were more influential or more numerous than those which were presented in 1873, 1874, and 1875. I have not the figures at hand, but I know that those were monster petitions. They came to a Government which was led by hon. gentlemen opposite. They prayed for prohibition. Select committees were appointed by both this House and the Senate, they made their investigations, and both of these committees reported in favour of immediate and total prohibition. But the House and the Government were not satisfied with that, and a commission was appointed to investigate the matter. The commissioners went to different countries and made a year's study of the subject and embodied their views in a report to the Government, and another resolution was presented to the House, and the great temperance convention which met in 1875 also passed a resolution in favour of prohibition. After all that, the Government did not pass a prohibitory liquor law, and I think Mr. Mackenzie stated, as his reason for not doing so, that he did not think the country was ripe for such a measure. Since that time, sixteen or seventeen years have passed, and the world's experience has ripened, and the history of temperance effort and of prohibitory legislation has taken a wide stride forward, so that now it occupies a significant and important position which it did not at that time. How many men in this House have studied what has been done during that period, and followed it closely? I think that every man in this House wants to know what has been done and to get at the results of experiments which have been made in other countries, if he desires to give an intelligent expression of opinion on this subject. During that time Kansas has been added to the roll of prohibition States, and Iowa has also been added to the roll of prohibition States. These laws have remained in force and I believe with great benefit to the countries which have adopted them. It is true that some people dispute that,