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The Plebiscite.

"I cannot but commend, says Bishop Hall, that great clerk of Paris, who, when King Louis of France required him to write down the best word that ever he had learnt, called for a fair skin of parchment, and in the midst of it wrote this one word "Measure," and sent it sealed up to the King. The King, opening the sheet, and finding no other inscription, thought himself mocked by this philosopher, and, calling for him, expostulated the matter; but when it was shown him that all virtues and all religious and worthy actions were regulated by this one word, and that, without this, virtue itself turned vicious, he rested satisfied.

And so he well might; for it is a word well worthy of the seven sages of Greece, from whom, indeed, it was borrowed, and only put into a new coat. For while he said of old (for his motto): "Nothing too much," he meant no other than to comprehend both extremes under the mention of one; neither in his sense is it any paradox to say that too little is too much; for, as too much bounty is prodigality, so too much sparing is niggardness."

There is no quality of the mind by which men, even good men, are more apt to be misled than zeal. Even where the object is good, it ought not to carry us beyond the bounds of moderation. When the Prohibition Plebiscite Act received its first reading before parliament in April last, sensible men on both sides of politics asked why the country should be put to the expense of preparing ballot papers for the purpose of ascertaining the wishes of a majority of freemen upon the question of prohibition. However, it is now too late for useful expostulation. In a few days, the following question is to be submitted to all persons entitled to vote at a Dominion election:—

"Are you in favour of the passing of an Act prohibiting the importation, manufacture or sale of spirits, wine, ale, beer, cider and all other alcoholic liquors for use as beverage?"

Since the introduction of this bill calling for an opinion from the common people upon a matter about which they are periodically humbugged by politicians, the country has been flooded with the views of promi-

ent men upon the question at issue, and we have been treated to an eloquent outpouring from pulpits and platforms, denunciatory of the circulation of decanters even at official and state dinners; forbidding the half-glasses of sherry given with cake to New Year's callers; fearfully condemnatory of "hot Scotch," even when administered in homœopathic doses; and actually interdicting cider—a nectarean juice served at the harvest-home to inspire song and story, but absolutely useless as a beverage for painting landscapes in the brain of man. Those who have the temerity to plead, like that broadminded cleric, Principal Grant, that intemperance is a decaying vice and Canada a remarkably sober community receive no more consideration from the intemperate advocates of the plebiscite and compulsion than is accorded to the toper who can only hiccough an objection to being robbed of his beer by an act of parliament. Without desiring to record an opinion upon the wisdom of that great clerk of Paris, who furnished a former King of France with the best word that ever he had learnt, "moderation," we do seriously protest against the conduct of men on both sides of politics who favoured asking this question of our people at the expense of the country, and once again we ask of Messrs. Fisher, Foster and their followers:—If a majority of those who take the trouble to answer this question should reply in the affirmative, what then?

The entire situation in regard to this absurd pandering by successive governments to the so-called temperance party recalls the following story:—

A certain horsey Englishman bought a new horse, and when the animal was delivered to him by the servant of its former owner, the following conversation took place between the Englishman and the groom: "Have you anything to tell me about him?"

"Well, sir," answered the man, "the 'oss only has two faults." "What are they?" "He's terrible 'ard to ketch," said the groom. "Oh, that doesn't matter." "And there's the other fault," continued the faithful groom. "He ain't no good when you've caught 'im."

The plebiscitum is terribly expensive to take, and, when taken, "ain't no good."