

to me this measure is one which to succeed at all must have a very strong sentiment in its favor, and that sentiment cannot be presumed upon the mere accident that a majority of the voters who voted on the by-law were in favor of it. If it be true that an overwhelming majority of the people, and that all the clergy are in favor of the Dunkin Act, there can be no difficulty in saying that the majority of those entitled to vote at an election shall affirm their desire for the passage of this Bill before it becomes law. I cannot imagine that in voting for this Bill we are seeking to repeal the Scott Act, unless you admit that public opinion on the subject is pretty evenly divided. We have had statements made by hon. gentlemen opposite, as to the number of votes polled for members of this House. I judge that, taking the average all round, it will be found the successful candidates polled at the last general election about an average of 40 per cent. of the votes in their respective constituencies. Political opinion is very evenly divided in this country. The member for West Durham, I think, speaking on one occasion outside the House, made a very elaborate calculation to show how few votes would change the entire aspect of political opinion in the House. If political opinion is so evenly divided, and that 40 per cent. of the electors have voted for each member, I think we may fairly assume there would be no difficulty in getting a vote to the extent of 50 per cent., provided there was such a strong, overwhelming opinion in favor of this measure as would justify its being enacted at all. That is my argument. Hon. gentlemen who are very strong and earnest temperance advocates—who devote a great deal of their time to the advocacy of temperance principles, and who, from their situation, are constantly in the presence, if I may use the expression, of the evils of intemperance, I can readily understand are willing to resort to any means that may be adopted that seem to offer a prospect of removing those evils. But what I think they fail in is this: they will not remember that the mere placing of a law of this kind on the Statute-book, and its subsequent adoption by a county, does not necessarily produce the results they so much desire. Their whole argument is based on the assumption that the moment the Scott Act is passed, drinking disappears. We know, as a matter of fact, that in Maine, where prohibition has lasted for a great many years, there is a great deal of drinking, that many persons are convicted of drunkenness, and crime has been on the increase, I do not say because of prohibition, but in spite of it. The member for West Middlesex told us, to-night, that he wished the people of this country were as moral, high-toned and intellectual as the people of the New England States. Now, I find an article in a leading organ of public opinion, which I dare say hon. gentlemen opposite will not treat in the sneering way that they have treated any extract from another organ of public opinion cited by the member for East York. I see in to-day's *Globe* an article which deals with this very subject. I will read from it two short extracts to show how unfair it was to assume that the tone of morality in the New England States is higher than the tone in this country. The first is as follows:—

"Benjamin Trumbull, in 1875, mourned that 439 divorces had taken place in Connecticut within a century, and 389 of these within a half century. President Dwight was alarmed at one divorce to every one hundred marriages. But during the fifteen years preceding 1879 the same State averaged 446 annually, and the ratio of divorces to marriages was 1 to 10.4. Vermont granted 94 divorces in 1860, and 197 in 1877; ratio to marriages, 1 in 14. Rhode Island grants about 180 per year; ratio to marriages, 1 in 13. Statistics in New Hampshire and Maine are defective, but the number of divorces in 1870 was 159; in 1878, 241. Fifteen out of sixteen counties in Maine granted 437 divorces in 1878. In four counties for which returns were made in 1880, there was an increase during that year of from 125 to 171, more than one-third."

Then, after a number of extracts and statements in relation to the growth of immorality in the New England States, the article goes on to say:

"The lecturer does not claim that divorce and licentiousness stand to each other strictly in the relation of cause and effect. This is, no doubt,

partly true. But the primary cause of both are common and lie deeper. There can be no doubt that the three classes of evils named—divorce, licentiousness, and the destruction of unborn life—spring from common sources. They all have their roots in wrong and vicious principles wrought into the New England civilization. The love of wealth, ease, display; the cowardly shrinking from the strain of limited means, sturdy toil and simplicity of living are amongst the worst foes of the frugal and virtuous family life. And closely connected with these is the loosening of the restraints of religion upon the minds and consciences of many."

I give those extracts from an editorial in to-day's *Globe* as an offset to the statements of the hon. member for Middlesex as regards the moral condition of the people of New England. I do not, for a moment, say it is due to prohibition, but I do say it exists in spite of prohibition, and that prohibition has not produced that high moral character in the people that the hon. gentleman asserts. But we are told that the principle now proposed, in the Bill, is entirely unheard of. Why, already, we have had cited the action of the Legislature of Ontario, which, in the matter of bonuses to railways, or any other public enterprise, requires an absolute majority of the votes of all entitled to vote. I find, at the last Session of the Quebec Local Legislature, an Act was obtained, I may say as the result of a strong temperance agitation in Montreal—all about which I know, because I took an active part in it in connection with the issuing of licenses in a part of the city which it was thought did not require them—I find that the principle laid down in the cities of Montreal and Quebec was that no license should be granted to any person, if an absolute majority of the voters signified their opposition. The temperance men of Montreal were most gratified with this provision, feeling confident that they could prevent the granting of licenses in places where they did not wish the sale of liquor. We have that principle affirmed in many other ways. It governs our dealings with property and runs through the whole of our legislation in regard to it; in such cases a simple majority of votes is not sufficient; in some cases two-thirds, in others three-fourths of the votes are the proportions insisted upon. In cases of insolvency, for instance, dealing with property, a mere majority does not give a man a discharge; it requires a certain large proportion. Take our railway legislation and the authorization to issue bonds to take precedence of the existing securities, and postpone perhaps a chance of a return for one portion if not its destruction altogether, as a paying investment; in this case there is not simply a majority of the stockholders needed, but two-thirds or three-fourths must vote for such a change. And so, whenever property is affected in any way, this principle runs through the whole of our legislation. That is the principle proposed in this particular case. We have here an attempt to pass a law the effect of which is to destroy the business, whether that business be good or bad, but one up to this time permitted by the law. This law destroys the value of property created in connection with that business, and it is surely not too much to say that there should be such a consensus of public opinion in favor of this law as would be shown by a majority of those actually entitled to vote. I quite admit the Bill is defective in phraseology, and that difficulties might arise in connection with it. But in Committee it could be amended to prevent the occurrence of the difficulties pointed out by the hon. member for West Middlesex. All that is desired by the friends of the Bill is that an actual majority of those entitled to vote should vote on a law like the Scott Act before its enforcement in any locality. And we desire to have that done for this reason, that the experience of the past has shown that the passage of these by-laws has not resulted as their friends anticipated; that they resulted so differently from what they anticipated that they have all been repealed, and we desire that in regard to any new law of this kind that there shall be at least a fair and reasonable prospect of its success. It is the more necessary that that should be the case in regard to the Scott