

Quebec Correspondence of the C. T. Advocate.

QUEBEC, April 24, 1855.

Matters wag about as usual. The House is more disposed to work, and as a natural consequence less disposed to talk than when I last wrote you. The approach of summer and the expected opening of the navigation appears to have excited a desire for home. The members are anxious to get to their farms, their counting houses and their law offices. One question alone remains which appears of sufficient interest to arouse the lethargic feeling, and work members into something like an animated debate. The opponents of the Prohibitory Liquor Law, foiled in every stratagem whereby it was sought to defeat the measure, have now made up their minds to talk it down, and as the time of the House is very much occupied, and it is almost impossible to get anything before it until a very late hour, unless it happen to be a first order, they hope to be successful. On Monday night this was tried. The question did not come up until about 10 o'clock, and at half-past 1 no vote had been taken. It was deemed more prudent to permit an adjournment, as the opponents of the bill seemed determined to prevent, if possible, a vote being taken. It is hoped that it may be brought up for discussion at an early hour on Monday evening next, and then it is determined to sit it out. If the opponents of the measure are determined to attempt a prevention of the vote by talkers against time, the friends of the measure must only make up their mind to exercise a little patience and endurance. Cold water ought to be able to stand a night's work as well as Eau-de-vie.

In the meantime there are abundant amendments suggested. Mr. Dufresne, a very intelligent and worthy member of the House, has given notice of quite a list of alterations, all of which he hopes to have introduced into the measure. The amendments are introduced in good faith, and by a gentleman who feels the evils of intemperance, and so far as his own conduct is concerned exercises a wholesome influence on the subject. They, therefore, deserve a serious consideration, and will, no doubt, command much attention from the House. I do not approve of them, and should regret very much to see them adopted. They would entirely destroy the character of the law, and render perfectly nugatory all attempts at its enforcement. The budget of amendments commences as follows:—

"The retailing of intoxicating liquors, in the manner which is denominated 'by the glass' or 'by the dram' is prohibited, and the sale of such liquor in any quantity, with a view to its being drunk on or about the premises where it is sold, is a selling by the glass within the meaning of this section.

"The places commonly known as 'dram shops' or 'grog shops' are hereby prohibited, and declared public nuisances, and the establishment or keeping of one shall be held presumptive evidence of the violation by the keeper thereof of the preceding section.

"The establishment or keeping of a place of any description whatever, and whether within or without any building, coming within the spirit and intent of this Act, and the establishment or the keeping of a place of any description where other persons are accustomed to resort, providing their own liquor of the prohibited character, purchased elsewhere, and drinking it there, shall be taken to be keeping a 'grog shop' within the meaning of this Act, and to be prohibited."

To every one of these propositions I could readily assent. They are already recognised in the prohibitory law, and

the mode of expressing them adopted by Mr. Dufresne is certainly sufficiently comprehensive; but in the very next amendment the whole groundwork is destroyed, and the comely superstructure must, of necessity, tumble down. Here it is:—

"The sale of any Intoxicating Liquor in a less quantity than one gallon is prohibited, but nothing in this Act shall prevent or prohibit the sale of Intoxicating Liquor in any quantity demanded, to any sick person, or for the use of any sick person, if a certificate of the Physician attending such person, or of a Priest, or of a Minister residing in the locality, attesting that such liquor is required for such person, is exhibited and delivered to the person selling such liquor."

This is virtually converting every dram shop into an apothecary store, and every druggist's establishment into a dram shop. The idea of making the sale in quantities less than one gallon criminal, and in quantities over that quite legal. Does Mr. Dufresne imagine for a moment that intemperance will less prevail, even if liquor were sold in quantities not less than a gallon? In Upper Canada a gallon of whisky can be obtained for 1s. 6d. currency, and less than that quantity is seldom bought, except when purchased by the glass at the tavern bar. I am much afraid that the law, if so amended, never could be enforced, and that even if it could, it would go but little way in relieving the country from the evils of intemperance.

Mr. Dufresne, however, goes further in his effort to entrench as little as possible on the traffic:—

"Provided always, That a Tavern-keeper or Hotel-keeper duly licensed, shall not be considered as selling Intoxicating Liquor by the glass within the prohibition of this Act, or as selling the same in contravention of this Act, by reason of his selling wine to any traveller or to any person lodging and boarding in his house; Provided such wine is sold and drunk at the ordinary meals of such traveller or boarder.

"Provided also, That any Tavern-keeper or Hotel-keeper, who may be convicted of having permitted or suffered any such traveller or boarder to get into a state of Intoxication with Liquor so furnished at the ordinary meals, will be considered as having sold Liquors by the glass or by the dram, contrary to the provisions of this Act, and shall be subject to the Penalty herein provided for such offence."

This completely destroys any effect that could possibly be produced by the preceding restrictions. The law if amended as Mr. Dufresne desires, would simply be a further traffic, which, being an irregularity in itself, having no fellowship with the great brotherhood of professions, cannot be regulated.

Mr. Gamble has given notice of the following:—

"On the Motion for receiving the Report of the Committee of the Whole, on the Bill for Prohibiting the sale of Intoxicating Liquors.—That the Report be not now received, but that it be resolved that a humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor General, praying that he will be pleased to issue a Commission for the purpose of visiting those portions of the United States where laws prohibiting the sale of Intoxicating Liquors are in force, enquiring into the operation of those laws, now far they have been enforced and proved successful in the suppression of intemperance, and their general effect upon the tone and condition of the social communities in those States, and reporting the result of their investigations, to His Excellency, for the information of the Legislature."

The motion would be a good one, if the Bill were defeated, with a view of bringing additional facts to bear on the House during another session. It is to be hoped however that it will not be required.

T. W.