

Mr. S. A. Abbott, the Acting Secretary, then read the following report, which, on motion of Rev. Mr. Kines, seconded by Rev. Mr. Jamieson, was referred to the Committees on Legislation and The State of the Work.

ANNUAL REPORT.

It is proper, perhaps at the outset to allude to the circumstances which have placed me for the time being in the position of Acting Corresponding Secretary of the Dominion Alliance. The Rev. Thos. Gales, who was Secretary of the Alliance since its organization in 1876, died in Montreal on the 24th of October, last. A few days before his death, and while dissolution was imminent, he requested me to make the necessary arrangements for the present Council Meeting. It was impossible for me to refuse, and I consented with extreme reluctance, temporarily to accept the post, my acceptance having been sanctioned by the President of the Alliance and the Chairman of the Executive. The great misfortune which has befallen the Alliance and the temperance cause generally throughout the Dominion, in the death of Mr. Gales, will be more fittingly set forth by resolution during this course of the meeting.

LEGISLATION.

The chief legislative event of the year is the passage of the "Liquor License Act, 1883," which will only come into full operation May next. Except in Nova Scotia, where it superseded in some respects, more effective provincial legislation, the Act was generally received with much satisfaction by the temperance public, as marking a very distinctive advance in restrictive legislation, but the high hopes conceived of its value have been lessened in some minds by doubts cast upon its constitutionality.

PUBLIC OPINION.

But among the masses of the people there has never been a more prosperous year for the temperance cause. Educating agencies are multiplying on every hand. The popular knowledge concerning the nature of alcohol—which is the most sure and durable basis of temperance legislation—has been steadily increasing, and the Dominion of Canada is getting its full share of the remarkable temperance wave which is sweeping over Great Britain and America.

Concerning the progress in the several provinces, I can only give such items as I have been able to gather. The reports of the provincial branches to be published in the next Year Book will give more complete details.

ONTARIO.

Halton is still the only county that has adopted the Scott Act. Though the Act has not entirely prohibited liquor selling, it has greatly diminished it in towns and villages, and nearly extirpated it from rural districts. Fourteen clergymen in Halton have given the following testimony:—

"Whereas a controversy has been going on in the public press of the province, as to the benefit of the Canada Temperance Act in the County of Halton, we hereby give it as our unqualified judgment, derived from personal observation, that it has largely decreased the sale of strong drinks, as evidenced by the sobriety of the people at all the public gatherings in the county. We are also further convinced that drunkenness has vastly decreased owing principally to the almost entire suppression of the 'treating system,' all statements to the contrary notwithstanding."

Steps preliminary to the submission of the Scott Act are being taken in the counties of Oxford, Norfolk, Essex, Carlton, Kent, Lambton, Dundas, Stormont and Glengarry.

QUEBEC.

The Dunkin Act is in force in the counties of Brome and Richmond since 1877. In Brome it is regarded by the public as useful, but imperfect, and as having greatly diminished the sale of liquor. In Richmond, the town of that name, when incorporated, rejected the Act, but outside the town the results are returned as remarkably favorable. In many of the French parishes of the province prohibition prevails by the simple method of the municipal councils refusing licenses. Among the French population there is now visible a distinct stirring of public opinion in respect to the temperance question. In the cities of Montreal and Quebec there are large vigilance associations composed of influential French citizens, under the patronage of the bishops of the dioceses, and whose object is the vigorous enforcement of the license law. Many of the French papers, too, publish editorials and contributed articles discouraging the drinking customs and deploring the evils of the liquor traffic.

The Provincial branch held its annual meeting in Montreal last week. The following resolution was adopted:

"That the Quebec branch request the Dominion Alliance to use its influence to obtain amendments to sections 32 and 47 of the License Act of 1883, so that a majority of the voters shall be substituted in lieu of two-thirds and three-fifths respectively."

The annual provincial pic-nic was held at Cowansville on August 31st. Sir. A. T. Galt presided, and, along with two members of the House of Commons and one member of the Quebec Government, spoke strongly for prohibition.

NOVA SCOTIA.

The Provincial branch met on the 31st October. The Secretary, Mr. Patrick Monaghan, stated in his report that the temperance work was being vigorously prosecuted. The orders of the Sons of Temperance and Good Templars have been extending and added largely to their membership. The Sons of Temperance have made unparalleled progress during the year. Since Nov. 1st, 1883, to January 14th, 1884, 84 new divisions have been organized, and 26 resuscitated, a total of 110.

During the session of the Local Legislature a bill was introduced with the object of making the Provincial License Law less stringent in its operation, but it was lost by a large majority, only four or five members voting for it.

In October last the Scott Act was adopted by a large majority in the county of Cumberland, making the eleventh county where the Act prevails, while Yarmouth is preparing to take the vote. Reports from the Scott Act counties show that in some of them it works satisfactorily. In others there is much difficulty in enforcing it, owing to the number and delay of appeals on mere technicalities, and the indisposition of the officers to do their duty. Under the Act a certain time is required to elapse after the expiration of the licenses in a county adopting the Act before it can come into force; but in several counties which adopted the Act no licenses were running when the proclamation was issued; hence the lawyers claim that the date of the expiry of the licenses has never been reached, and therefore that the Act cannot come into force. In order to meet the difficulties that have arisen in the operation of the Act Mr. Monaghan recommends that it be amended, first, so as to lessen the facilities for appeal from convictions; second, that in counties where no licenses are running the Act shall come into force thirty days after the proclamation of the Governor in Council.

NEW BRUNSWICK.

In September last a vigorous movement for the organization of the province was begun by Prof. Foster, M.P., and Rev. John McLeod, President of the Provincial Branch. Auxiliary alliances were organized in the counties of Queen's, Westmoreland, Charlotte, St. John, Albert, York and Carlton. The constitution adopted by these county organizations commits them to three plans of practical work: first, to hold at least one mass-meeting half yearly in the chief places of the county; second, to scatter widely temperance literature; and third, to see to the enforcement of the Canada Temperance Act. Each county alliance pledges itself to give at least \$50 a year toward the general fund of the Provincial Branch, to be used in lecture work and the distribution of temperance literature. The Provincial Branch is composed only of delegates from the county alliances, from which it derives its financial support.

The Canada Temperance Act is in force in nine counties and one city. It is thoroughly endorsed by the people, and many of the legal difficulties which at first obstructed its operation, have been cleared away. So far it has been a fair success, and still better results are expected from it by the additional powers conferred by the new Liquor License Act, 1883. In Charlotte county an agitation was started to repeal the Scott Act, but the Alliance promised so vigorous resistance that the attempt appears to have been abandoned.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND.

In this Province also there has been great activity in the extension of the Order of Good Templars. In Prince County an attempt is being made to repeal the Scott Act, and the vote will be taken in a few days. The operation of the Act is said to be much hampered by delays from appeals on technicalities. The Provincial Alliance, however, has been very vigorous in prosecuting infractions, and on January 16th inst., there were forty or fifty cases down for trial.