

## PROHIBITORY LIQUOR LAW.

Hon. Mr. VIDAL moved the appointment of a special committee, to whom shall be referred all petitions presented to this House, praying for the enactment of a law to prohibit the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors. He said—I need scarcely dwell on the importance of the matter which this motion brings under your consideration. The simple fact that such a vast number of petitions have been presented to Parliament, coming not merely from individuals, but from municipal and other bodies, and the knowledge we have that the great Province of Ontario, speaking through its Legislature, has memorialized the House of Commons with the same object, are sufficient to make the matter one of vast importance, to which we may very well devote our attention. I do not propose to use arguments at present in favour of a prohibitory liquor law. That will come up in due time, when the Committee I ask for presents its report. But I do call attention to the desirability of legislation in this direction. We know for a long term of years it has been attempted to regulate the traffic in intoxicating liquors. We have on the Statute book of the Empire 4,052 statutes, all directed to this end, to repress, or reduce if possible, the serious evils which are acknowledged to result from this traffic. The addresses of Grand Juries and Judges, the statistics at command, and the evidence of all connected with the administration of the criminal law, impress us with the fact that, to this cause, intemperance is due, as well as a very large proportion of the crimes committed. Intemperance crowds our lunatic asylums and jails. I know that legislation of the kind contemplated is considered by some an interference with personal rights and privileges. But do we not at present, by our law, deprive many of the right of making or selling liquors which is got by the payment of license? I know prohibition would affect the revenue of the country injuriously, and that it may appear to some an unwise policy. I know well that the revenue thus raised, I and many others who do not pay a dollar upon spirits, would have to contribute to make up. But when we look at the expenditure that might be saved, we have a measure of the importance of this proposed legislation. There would be a great reduction in the cost of preserving the peace and securing the well-being of society. This is not a new experiment, but one that has been tried with success in many other places, and I do trust that, profiting by their experience, when we

attempt legislation on this subject, it will prove effective and permanent, diminishing greatly or exterminating this vice in the course of a few years. We are told we can't make men sober by Act of Parliament. That is not the object before us, but the protection of those who are suffering in person, worldly circumstances, and mind by the prevalence of intemperance in our land. I do trust this subject will not be allowed to drop, but that Parliament will pass strong and efficient measures in the direction prayed for by my petition. I would like the country to understand that Parliament is in earnest. If the motion passes, it may have a good effect on the minds of those who might be disposed to engage in this traffic, it might tend to prevent the erection of distilleries and breweries, and prepare the way for our abolishing the evil, without acting quite so violently as interfering with certain rights and privileges now enjoyed by others. (Hear hear.)

Hon. Mr. FLINT seconded the motion, saying the vast number of petitions presented to the House on this subject, shows it is necessary for us to take some action upon them. I think the present is a move in the right direction. (Hear, hear.) Although I do not believe or expect we shall obtain a prohibitory law this session, yet I think these petitions and the action of Parliament may lead to such a collection of statistics as should impress every legislator, desiring the good of the country, with the necessity of enacting such a law. So long ago as 1843, I moved in Parliament, then at Montreal, for a committee of five to consider the crime and other results flowing from the use of intoxicating liquors. With great difficulty I got a committee of five, but the session being short, we did not succeed in doing anything. In 1849, however, I got a committee of fifteen. We produced an elaborate report, which was printed and circulated by thousands. That did considerable good in arousing some who had never thought on the subject, to the importance of doing something to arrest the progress of intemperance. In 1855, I think, we had another committee at the head of which was the Hon. Malcolm Cameron. It reported, and from time to time ever since, this question has been urged upon the attention of the Legislature, but never so strongly as at present. The only object I and others have in advocating a prohibitory law is the alleviation of the condition of the victims of intemperance. I believe it is our duty as a rising nation