

## General News.

## Canada Temperance Act.

SENATOR ALMON'S SPEECH.

Hon. Mr. VIDAL moved the third reading of Bill (M.) An Act to explain and further amend the Canada Temperance Act of 1878 and an Act of 1879 amending the same.

Hon. Mr. ALMON moved in amendment, "That the dealing in ales, porter, lager beer, cider and light wines, containing less than ten per cent. of alcohol, be exempted from the operation of the Canada Temperance Act of 1878." He said: It is with a great deal of hesitation that I introduce this resolution. In the first instance, I was very sorry to do anything which would interfere with my friend, the hon. member from St. John's, I was pleased with the way in which he introduced his amendment to the original Act, but why did they not do it without amendment, and for a temperance speech, there was less latitude in it than in any speech of the kind I had ever heard. He advocated temperance without thinking that every body who was opposed to him was in favor of temperance, and never indicated that they were, in fact, drunkards, which temperance people generally do. He did not do so, and I was sorry to introduce anything which would displease him. There was another motive which actuated me. I was unwilling to do anything which could be taken as an endorsement of the Act. Nobody looks upon that side with more horror than I do. In this Canada of ours there are many houses, both the palatial residences of the rich, and the cottages of the poor, in which there are skeletons in the closet, occasioned by intemperance; skeletons which interfere with the happiness of the family and cause sorrow and terror by the rattle of their bones to the inmates of those houses. I am aware that in many a house in this land of ours, extending from Halifax to the western shore of Vancouver, the widow may be seen leaning her head on her hand, with her children around her, for whom she knows not where the morrow's bread will come, looking at the empty chair and thinking that but a few short years ago, full of love and happiness, she married the love of her youth, in the health and strength of manhood, and with their prospects bright before them. That man died a drunkard's grave; whiskey or rum brought him to it. What may be happening this very night in many a Canadian home? The mother sitting over the half burnt embers still the small hours of the night, watching for the footsteps of her son, once her pride, and still her loved one; waiting to hear his hands on the door latch, that she may let him in, and his face light up, and his arms around her in the hope that nobody shall see his disgrace but herself. Feeling all that, if I suppose the Bill would conduce to promote temperance, although it is a tyrannical Bill, I would support it. If it is true that no good can come of it, I am sure that it will do more harm than good. It is the duty of the people of this country, and why does it not? Because, as was explained by the hon. gentleman from Fredericton (Mr. Odell), the clauses of this bill are of a tyrannical nature. A man is tried for selling intoxicating liquor, and he is found guilty, and the magistrate and jury are compelled to give evidence against his husband. In case of murder or treason a wife cannot be compelled to give evidence against her husband, but in this case the opposite rule applies. Supposing the husband is guilty, what chance has the wife? The wife either perishes herself and loses the respect of her children, or convicts her husband by her evidence. If she perishes herself, does that conduce to temperance? Everybody knows that a mother's prayers and what she says to her children are of more value than any sermon from a drunkenness; but this bill would remove that safeguard. A mother can scarcely appeal to the Deity whose name she has taken in vain; and what a son care for a mother's opinion when he looks upon her as a perjurer. Supposing she gives her evidence against her husband—what happens then? They are joined together by the law which says "those whom God has united let no man put asunder," but does not this law put them asunder? If she gives evidence against her husband, it destroys their happiness for life. There is another clause which is even worse than this. I shall not quote the words which my hon. friend from Fredericton (Mr. Odell), used much better than I can do, but he described the case of a man brought before the court of justice for selling liquor. He is fined, and then asked if he ever was fined before. If he says "yes," his fine is almost doubled. Is this the nineteenth century? Am I right in supposing that such a law originated in 1878? No; that originated in the time of the Tudors, and that the thumb-screw and rack to put it down at the time of Henry VIII. Now, what is the effect of this law where it can be carried out? I have shown already that the feeling of the people cannot be in favor of it, and that it is not to be carried out, except by the people rising up and putting down drunkenness themselves. The people who will endeavor to enforce this law will be the best kind of informers; we see them mentioned in the papers, and a man employed as a whiskey informer has generally been guilty of some bad act before. These informers will go round to the places where liquor is sold, and the consequence will be that a person who sells liquor illicitly cannot sell also cider or light wines, because, consequently, his trade will be difficult of concealment. He must sell spirits, and of the strongest and most concentrated kind. Of course, the larger the percentage of alcohol, the less bulk it will take up, and the less liability there will be to detection. It cannot be old, it must be new whiskey, and contain a large percentage of alcohol, which, we know, is only eliminated from liquor by fire. Filled all is a deadly poison; the target dose which you could give a patient is three drops, and it should double the dose for would not be able to answer your questions when you called again. That is the stuff which this so-called "Temperance Act" will compel the inhabitants of Canada to take, and how will they take it? They will not go together to a tavern and drink it, but they will be compelled by the law to take it from the counter and rush out. Coming out he will feel that he has committed a crime by breaking the law. Instead of getting drunk he becomes maddened, and there is a loss of self-respect as well, and this is the result of the law. I do not know that any one depends on figures which appear in the newspapers, because they are not always correct; but we see it stated that crime has increased in the State of Maine since a prohibitory liquor law was adopted there. It is certainly the law of the majority, and I think I have shown you that you would have a very low opinion of our countrymen if it was not so.

The case of the county of Sunbury was cited the other day. Sunbury is a county with 1,000 voters. This Scott Act was limited to the people there, and yet less than 200 voters went to the polls to record their votes, and there was a majority of 120 or 180 in favor of passing the Act. Is not that a minority? You may say that the others did not vote, but why did they not vote? The majority of those who voted were Sons of Temperance, who had their secret signs and pass words, and their weekly and monthly meetings; who collected subscriptions, and are so organized that they can throw their whole weight in support of the cause. To say that they defeated the cause is to say that soldiers will just militia. Take the case of the Orangemen or Masons; we all know that in elections they possess great power, not because of their organization; and they throw their whole strength on one side or the other. I shall be faulted, I have no doubt, for saying that the speakers that will follow me, with being an advocate of temperance. They will only prove to you the truth of what I have said. I have explained how the people drink now in places where this Act is in force; how the people drink in places where it is not in force. I have explained how the people drink in places where it is not in force. I have explained how the people drink in places where it is not in force.

"Observe it strikes me shall it more impair. An hour's importance to the man's heart."

We read who collected there, the village blacksmith, the barber, the tailor, and others of the place; they all met to talk of the news of the day. That their conversation was proper cannot be doubted, from the description of the maid who lived in the house, which appears to have been the beverage which they drank.

"New, much older than their side, went round. And the maid, half willing to be pressed, said that the cup and pat to the foot."

Is not that a beautiful description? You know that licentious vice was never cast upon her, her ear was never offended by a word that a maiden should not hear, and a better judge of human nature than Goldsmith never existed. That conviviality is done away with, by this law, and drinking over the counter, of the poison I have mentioned, takes its place. Still I am sure, if the law of my friend prevails, Notes Ambrosian against We have all heard of the meetings of Christopher North, the "Edrick Shepherd," and others of the kind. I have never seen of their meetings, and I can almost fancy that the walls give back the taste of their "Attila" said. Is that to be done away with by the operation of this law? If it did prevail in the past what will the world would have lost. Those men have long since died, and their names are not in the annals of the world. The man who will read the Notes Ambrosian will see that from moderate drinking did not result all the vices which the hon. gentleman supposes. I have proved, at least in my own satisfaction, and I trust, to the satisfaction of a majority of those who hear me, that the law is opposed to morality. I think it will take very little trouble to prove that it is opposed to the Scriptures. We know that in the Old Testament we are told, "wine maketh the heart of man." Take that most significant poem in the old Prophecies of Isaiah, where you find metaphors drawn more frequently than from the vineyard and the wine press? Wine is spoken of as one of the bounties of Providence. In that book which I wish temperance men consulted more—the works of Solomon, who, I believe, was an authority on those things, and will be received as an authority in the Senate—I find this passage:—"And the roof (i.e., voice) of my mouth the best wine for my beloved, that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of those who are asleep to speak."

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