

Public Opinion.

THE GREAT DEPUTATION.

The delegates were charmed with the sympathetic tone of the Premier. They seem to have fancied that he was heart and soul on their side. So they cheered him heartily, thanked him, and went their way no wiser than they came. Never, we repeat, were men so gulled as these Bonifaces. It would be amusing to know what they had to say for themselves to their wives when they got home. If they told anything near the truth, the disappointed and angry dames must have enlightened them as to the extent of their folly in spending money and time in journeying to Ottawa to wait on the Premier. They might as well have staid at home and made themselves comfortable alongside their bar-room stoves.—*St. Marys Argus*.

A very large deputation waited on Sir John A. Macdonald at Ottawa on Friday last, praying for certain amendments to the Scott Act. They, however, got very little out of the Premier. He "taffied" them on their number, respectability, etc., etc., but said the Government was not a unit by any means on the question—neither was the Opposition—but that their petitions would have "the anxious, the earnest, and the immediate attention and consideration of himself and his colleagues." And there it remains, and no doubt the deputation of hotel-keepers are wondering what they went to Ottawa for.—*Embro Courier*.

The Government was not expected either to grant or refuse off hand the prayers of the liquor deputation. That for the Royal Commission is the only one, says the Premier, distinctly within the range of executive authority. The rest are for Parliament. It is likely that the current session will witness a struggle in Parliament. The "trade," against which the moral indignation of the whole country burns fiercely, but which is determined, nevertheless, to hold on to its ungodly gains, is thoroughly aroused. It is for the temperance community to "stand to their guns," when the only practicable measure of prohibition at their command is threatened. We agree with Sir John Macdonald that prohibition is the question of the hour, "exceeding in importance perhaps any other subject engaging the earnest and anxious attention of the men, women, and children of the Dominion," and we trust that the selfish pleas of those interested in the perpetuation of a bad traffic will be estimated at their true value by our legislators, and that they will keep their hands off the Scott Act, except for the purpose of so improving it as to make it more effective.—*Presbyterian Review*.

The liquor men, with others interested in the Scott Act, have been to Ottawa and returned. They have seen Sir John and other members of the Cabinet, and have laid before them their grievances. Some of the allegations are no doubt true, others are childish and entirely contrary to facts. When they say that the signatures to Scott Act petitions are secured by coercion, they are simply talking nonsense. When they ask the law to be amended so as to compel the petitioners to sign the petitions asking for the submitting of the Scott Act all in one place it is more nonsensical still. Sir John, in his remarks to the deputation, gave his opinion very candidly and in a straight-forward manner. He correctly informed them that, although they were a large and respectable body of men representing large money interests, he was only the servant of the people to carry out their wishes. He informed them that his cabinet as well as the people were divided upon the question, and, further, he had voted for it himself when before the house.—*Aylmer Express*.

For brazen audacity, blatant braggadocio, and wholesale mendacity, we commend the Licensed Victuallers' Ottawa Memorial before any work of fiction or fancy in modern or ancient times. It is a perfect monument of colossal impudence, and is, undoubtedly, a masterpiece of that exuberantly funny hyperbolist, Wm. Kyle. The first clause states that the people who have carried the Act, have done so out of painful ignorance of the facts. How stupid Mr. Kyle must deem the ordinary electors to be! They have had the advantage of untiring exhortation, night after night, from Messrs. Dadds, Lee & Co.; they have had the opportunity of wading through endless statistics, cooked and served up in the latest approved fashion by Mr. O'Keefe and his subalterns; they have been supplied with an unlimited amount of Mark-Twain-and-water ladled out by Mr. Kyle; and yet the petition says they were ignorant. Poor fellows. Perhaps they thought "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise." Clause No. 2, states that "electors have been coerced and intimidated into affixing their names" to the Scott Act petitions. This is a serious charge, and in the name of the Scott Act party of Canada, we demand proof. Mr. Fullerton boasted that Anti-Scott witnesses had committed "wilful perjury" in Halton. Perhaps the absence of the oath and the removal to Ottawa might induce the delegates to do something for the cause themselves. "Birds of a feather, etc." Clause 3, is the old whine for two-thirds majority. Beaten on the field they cry to the victors to build them a fort to hide behind. We cannot refrain from referring to one more clause which is a perfect whirl-wind of modesty. After asking for a commission of enquiry, whose investigations may be prolonged indefinitely, they blushing say that "until the report of the commission is submitted your memorialists believe that the Act should be suspended." What touching simplicity! We wonder that, in their innocence, they did not ask for the repeal of the Scott Act and a law to make temperance agitation criminal.—*Canadian Patriot*.

Much of what the Licensed Victuallers ask from the Dominion Government is just and reasonable. A sumptuary law which deprives men of personal rights, in obedience to the demands of their neighbors, ought not to go into effect unless sanctioned by a clear majority, and the resort to coercion, intimidation or bribery, when the vote on the Scott Act is taken, ought no more to enjoy immunity than they would in a parliamentary election. As the working of the Act is subject to much dispute, it would not be unreasonable to attempt to arrive at the real facts by means of a Royal Commission. There can be no real doubt that the general tendency of the measure is to substitute the secret, unlicensed

sale of spirits for the legal sale of light wine and beer. And there is much reason to doubt whether the quantity of alcohol consumed is lessened by the restrictions of the Scott Act. In the County of Northumberland, New Brunswick, the Act has been in force since September, 1890, and the county council, by a vote of seventeen to seven, expresses the opinion that the sale of intoxicating liquors has not been lessened, but rather increased. This agrees with what the Licensed Victuallers affirm. Sir John Macdonald was not able to promise that the demand for compensation for the deprivation of business will come before the Legislature backed by the united support of the Government.—*The Week*.

COMPENSATION.

The wind is so strong in favor of prohibition that there is no need of watching the direction which straws take. The whole bulk of the liquor interest cannot stand up against the gale. In the face of the big deputation of liquor dealers to Ottawa the other day, praying for compensation in case of the worst coming to the worst with them, Parliament has refused by a majority of 31 to affirm the principle of compensation. That is a knock down blow for the liquor interest. We are sorry to notice that the principal members of the Government, with the honorable exception of Sir Leonard Tilley, voted in favor of the unprecedented and mischievous proposition.—*Witness*.

The liquor-sellers, it would appear, are determined to fight the Scott Act and prohibition issues on the "compensation" line. There are two sides to the "compensation" issue, as those who clamor for it are likely to find before they get through. Their claim is impudent to the last degree; but impudence is a necessary quality of the business they are engaged in, and one that will stand a pretty liberal discount. Why not give "compensation" to thieves and burglars?—*Casket*.

Mr. Elitor, — I see that our worthy member is moving in Parliament for compensation to brewers and manufacturers of liquor for the loss sustained by them where the Scott Act has curtailed their profits. Would it not be a right movement to petition the Government to compensate families which have been deprived of the necessities of life, clothing, and homes by the thrust which the head of the household had for this unnecessarily manufactured article? I am sure that the amount of compensation which the Government would have to grant to families which have been robbed by the sale of liquor would be far more than the \$12,000,000 invested by brewers and distillers. Yesterday I was told of a man who had a large farm of 600 acres, and this is all lost to his family through drink causing him to neglect his business; and there are many in our midst who, if they left off using this soul-destroying and degrading stuff, would to-day, be in a far better condition.—*Conservative, in Berlin News*.

The whole subject of compensation awaits fuller discussion. So far as we have heard no definite plan has been proposed by its advocates. We are prepared to consider such plan when it shall have been formulated. In the meantime, we demur to compensation as a sop to those who threaten, unless thus recouped for losses, to turn law-breakers. It is the duty of Government to punish, not to pay off, those who defy the law. Nor have we been convinced of the legal right of a traffic depending upon a yearly license to compensation, when that yearly license is withheld by a majority of the people. The whole business, too, stands fairly convicted as a public nuisance. If those who are growing rich by inuring their neighbors are to be compensated, what of those who have suffered by the traffic, such as owners of property, which proximity to hotels or saloons have depreciated in value; business men, who have had to wipe off as bad debts accounts which ought to have been settled with money tossed over the bar; drunkards whom drink has robbed of property and health and future; families blasted; widows; orphans; wretches dragging through their miserable life diseased bodies and poisoned hearts, an inheritance from drunken parents? As a matter of justice, we demur to the proposal of compensation. As a matter of generosity, we are ready, when the time comes, to discuss it.—*Presbyterian Review*.

Sir John stated he would favor compensation to the dealers under a general prohibitory law. Now it appears to us to be an opportune time for the liquor dealers to join hands with the Scott Act people in demanding a prohibitory law. That is what they say they are after through the medium of the Scott Act, and as this Act is being carried all over the country and Sir John has pledged to grant a compensation, now is the time for all hands to go in for total prohibition. The temperance people will get rid of the traffic upon which they have declared war, and Sir John will compensate the dealers for their loss, and both parties will be satisfied.—*Aylmer Express*.

The government is not a unit on the subject. Speaking for himself, Sir John said that if Prohibition became general he should favor compensation. Until Prohibition becomes general, should it ever go so far, it would be difficult to measure the extent of the damage. So long as distilleries and breweries go on, the curtailing of their business would be only an imperfect measure of the extent of the injury which the loss occasions; if they were closed altogether, the difficulty of ascertaining the damage would not be insuperable. Sir John said the question of compensation had already been raised in Parliament; but a money vote can only be taken on the initiative of the Executive, and this initiative will not be forthcoming. The forms of Parliament provide for cases, where the Executive initiative is absent, by means of an address to the Crown. Should Parliament pass the address, the Government would have the duty put upon it of deciding whether it would introduce a measure of compensation, but Parliament is not likely to place itself in opposition to the current of feeling which is running strongly in favor of the Scott Act. Compensation is a distinct matter; but the advocates of the Scott Act have given indications that they are prepared to disregard the justice of the claims which the Licensed Victuallers have put forward. To rely on the hope of compensation by Parliament is, apparently, to rely on a broken reed.—*The Week*.