

PROHIBITION.

The advocates of prohibition have deemed it expedient to concur in a resolution, proposed by Mr. Ross of Middlesex, one of the most extreme members of the league, to the effect that the country is not yet prepared for a prohibitory law. It is difficult to understand how that motion could have been properly resisted by many of the political opponents of the Government, who, nevertheless, recorded their votes against it. Mr. Ross acted in accordance with a decision arrived at by the friends of the cause themselves, who have had the good sense to perceive that no benefit would be attained by attempting legislation at present. The truth is that while prohibition advocates profess not to introduce party politics into their proceedings, they are too ready to sacrifice their peculiar temperance notions to their political objects. We doubt very much whether if the parties now sitting to the right and left of the Speaker were to change seats, Dr. Schultz would have been so ready with his temperance motion, and, on the other hand, we think it highly probable that Mr. Ross and his friends could not, under such circumstances, have been induced to declare by their votes that public opinion is not yet ripe for a prohibitory law. To us it is simply disgusting to find men professing to be the special friends of religion and morality advocating a law that all persons gifted with common sense must know would be utterly demoralizing to the community. Even if there were that general concurrence of public opinion in favor of a prohibitory law which its most zealous advocates are compelled to admit does not exist, its enforcement would be simply impossible. With such a frontier as that between Canada and the United States, does any man in his senses imagine that smuggling could be prevented? Do the reverend gentlemen who declaim at prohibition meetings, harping eternally on the same string, but taking care never to grapple with arguments, reflect at all on the practical difficulties in the way of carrying their proposals into effect? We have no reason to suppose for a moment that they do, for neither on their platforms nor in their temperance newspapers do we ever see even an attempt to answer the arguments against a prohibitory liquor law. While on the subject, we may advert to a difficulty among the prohibitionists themselves as to the constitutional authority of the local legislature. To meet this the Hon. Mr. Vidal has proposed a series of resolutions in the Senate, the object being to pledge the local legislatures to assist all

municipalities which may adopt the Dunkin Act, and to pledge the Dominion Parliament to co-operate with all local legislatures which may pass acts prohibiting retail traffic in intoxicating liquors, by enacting a law to prohibit the manufacture and the importation of such intoxicating liquors within the territorial limits of such province. Strange to relate this most absurd proposition was only rejected on a division by 36 to 25 in the Senate of Canada. Let us just consider the practical effects of Mr. Vidal's proposition. In the case of a municipality adopting the Dunkin Act, as the county of York has done, all breweries and distilleries in the county would be closed at once, while the distilleries and breweries in an incorporated city, as, for instance, the city of Toronto, would be allowed to continue business. Mr. Vidal and Mr. Flint have not the common honesty to accompany their propositions by some measure of compensation to the parties whose properties they would destroy. We wonder how these gentlemen would like their own properties to be confiscated by act of Parliament. But let us suppose that the Province of Ontario were to legislate against all traffic in intoxicating liquors, then the Dominion Parliament ought, according to Messrs. Vidal and Flint, to prohibit the manufacture and importation of such liquors into that Province, permitting both in the Province of Quebec. On one side of the Ottawa river the traffic might be carried on, while on the other it would be illegal. A pretty state of morality we should see! Mr. Flint declared that he had been "trying to work up this prohibition question for 50 years," and he did not know that he should live to see it accomplished. We hardly think that he will, if he cannot discover some plan more consistent with common sense than Mr. Vidal's resolutions. Although the resolutions proposed by Mr. Vidal were not rejected with that unanimity that we should have expected in such a body as the Dominion Senate, we were glad to observe that there was a concurrence of opinion between the leader of the Government and the leader of the Opposition. The Hon. Mr. Scott took the ground that temperance could not be enforced by act of Parliament, and pointed out that if all the distilleries and breweries in the country were shut down liquor could be brought into the country by fraud or manufactured in illicit distilleries. There is no answering this argument. Mr. Scott's conclusion was that the result desired by the advocates of temperance was only to be obtained by educating the people in temperance principles, and not by

forcing it on them by statutory enactments. We should hope that the subject will now be dropped for the session.

"HARD TIMES."

We presume few will be prepared to deny that Canada has been passing through, nay is still in the deadly grasp and struggle of, "hard times." The fact is sufficiently and painfully evident in every newspaper we pick up, with its funereal list of Insolvents and glaring epitaph-advertisements of bankrupt sales. Nor do we need these to impress and enforce the disagreeable truth, for nearly every one of us however favored by natural shrewdness and business ability often find, by sad experience, our best efforts put forth in vain, and the monetary reward due to labor and anxiety fading away from us into the dim vista of things of the past, through circumstances which we have been alike unable to foresee or control. To say that this is pleasant, because salutary, is to "add insult to injury," and would have much the same "riling" effect upon us as the experience of some of us in our early days, when, after "stern reproof had left pain behind" our schoolmaster assured us that "it was all for our good." It may be true but it is rather hard just at that time and in those circumstances to be told so. We disapprove entirely of the proceedings of that schoolmaster, yet in what we are about to say we may, perhaps, be thought to imitate him. Where all are suffering more or less, none can be devoid of a wide and all-embracing sympathy. "The like misfortunes make men wondrous kind." By tracing causes, however, we may hope to point out some probably effectual remedies.

Were the complaint confined only to one or two branches of trade the causes could be more readily traced out, and relief afforded, probably at once, by some of those variations in the tariff, or changes in our trade relations with other countries, so vigorously advocated of late, and pressed upon the country's attention by men, undoubtedly sincere and honest, because convinced by facts that such remedies would meet the wants of that department of trade with which they are personally most thoroughly acquainted. But the universal nature of the complaint shows that any change for the better must be from the root upward to all the branches.

One noticeable feature is, that the retail merchant of all classes, and in all parts of the country, is, perhaps, the severest sufferer, though making but little outcry