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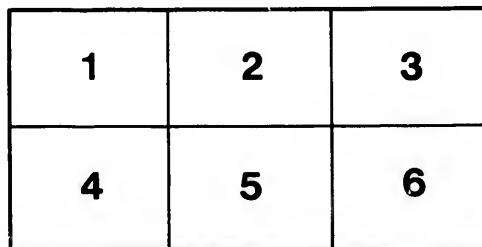
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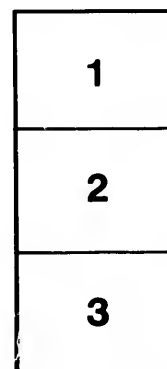
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# THE MOWAT GOVERNMENT AND PROHIBITION.

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## The RESPONSIBILITY of the HOUR

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Last January the people of this Province, by a majority of over 80,000, expressed their desire for the prohibition of the liquor traffic. In the month of February, in response to a call from the Provincial Executive, a monster representative Prohibition convention was held in Toronto. A deputation was appointed, and authorized on behalf of the temperance people of this Province, as represented at the convention, to interview the Ontario Government for a declaration of the views of the members of the administration on the question of Prohibition. At the hour appointed the Government met the deputation, which was representative in every sense of the convention, and the Attorney-General gave, his reply in response to the enquiry submitted to him, in the following words:

"If the decision of the Privy Council should be that, the Province has the jurisdiction to pass a prohibitory liquor law as respects the sale of intoxicating liquor, I will introduce such a bill in the following session, if I am then at the head of the Government.

"If the decision of the Privy Council is that the Province has jurisdiction to pass only a partial prohibitory liquor law, I will introduce such a prohibitory bill as the decision will warrant, unless the partial prohibitory power is so limited as to be ineffective from a temperance standpoint."

Without exception this formal enunciation of the policy of Sir Oliver Mowat in the presence of the majority of his colleagues was heard with profound satisfaction, irrespective of party. The announcement evoked gratification and unbounded

pleasure was manifested. On all sides the answer was regarded as full and unqualified. The deputation returned to the convention and reported the result of their interview and were greeted with long continued enthusiasm. No other thought prevailed throughout that vast gathering other than one of firm determination to support the statesman whose reply was so eminently satisfactory. It must not be forgotten that this declaration by Sir Oliver Mowat was not made in the form of a proposal by him to the prohibitionists, but, on the contrary, was obtained from him by the representatives of the convention in reply to direct enquiries, which, for obvious political reasons, he might have desired to evade rather than answer. It cannot, therefore, be said that he endeavored to force an advantage under auspicious circumstances to promote his political fortunes. The advance was made by those whose only expressed hope and aim at that time was the prohibition of the liquor traffic. That was the situation four short months ago.

It should now be considered whether any circumstance has occurred justifying in the least a violation of not only the tacit but the clearly expressed pledges then given to the veteran Premier of this Province by the Christian and temperance people gathered in their name at that convention. Yet the situation to-day is fraught with great danger to the prohibition cause. In how far the Christian people of this Province, irrespective of old party lines, practically pledged themselves to assist in upholding the arms of the Premier in carrying to completion, or in so far as the constitution will allow, the pledges thus given, is a subject for very serious consideration. If, by their request for a declaration of policy upon the question of prohibition from the Premier and their acceptance of that pledge as satisfactory, they did not practically promise their support to his government, it is difficult to understand the meaning of the English language or the object of the convention. No convention could in a more pronounced manner pledge its support upon a certain line of policy than that gathering did in declaring in favor of the Ontario Government. The Christian people of this Province were thus pledged not to withdraw their support from Sir Oliver upon any pretence whatever short of a public abandonment of the policy then instituted. To do so would be faithlessness of the most evident character. The Premier and his colleagues have continued to declare their adhesion to that policy. The present election therefore ceases to have the character existing upon previous occasions. This contest is not personal, but political, from the prohibition standpoint. If Sir Oliver is re-elected, he will be sustained by a majority.

some considerable resemblance to the vote upon prohibition last January the charge of being false to those who manifested clear and open sympathy with the cause of prohibition will be properly placed at the door of the Christian and temperance community of Ontario. Should the Mowat Government be defeated, or be successful by but a small majority, it can only be through the prohibitionists proving more faithful to party allegiance than to temperance principles.

The prohibitionists of Ontario, in view of these circumstances, should be thoroughly aroused to the peculiar danger of the situation, or prohibition and temperance legislation will be rolled back a generation. No political party or statesman, either provincial or federal, will be likely to place faith in pledges or promises, implied or pronounced, by prohibitionists, if the counting of the ballots on the 26th of June fails to show very large majority in favor of Sir Oliver Mowat. The ordinary ward politician accepts without question, as worthy of credence, the promises of four-fifths of the electors with whom he comes in contact, who, while making no special profession of goodness, are nevertheless found faithful to their pledges when they go to the ballot box. Shall the prohibition party be less careful of their pledges and promises than the everyday elector? In the history of the temperance cause of this country never were the hopes of long years of agitation in so precarious a position. The Christians have it in their power to show their honesty and integrity in the cause by carrying out the unsolicited pledges given on the occasion of the promises made by Sir Oliver Mowat. No political sophistry can relieve the right thinking people of Ontario of their responsibility on this subject. The temperance cause will triumph by the promises of the Premier and his colleagues being fulfilled. They can only fail of fulfillment by the temperance public not assisting his government at the polls. If that failure is effected the responsibility must rest, beyond doubt, upon the Christian prohibitionists of Ontario. This question should be thoroughly understood, so that afterwards it cannot be said that the people voted without a thorough comprehension of the situation. The eyes of the prohibitionists of this continent are turned towards Ontario calmly awaiting the result.

