

United States it would appear that this move had its ebb and flow. It was sometimes a tidal wave sweeping everything out of its way; then came a reaction. I do not know that these feverish and emotional expressions of opinion are the best, after all, for the welfare of the commonwealth. I would rather have a steady educational process, encroaching inch by inch upon whatever evils we wanted to remove, and holding every inch of the ground, and making the inch of to-day the circumstance and starting-place of to-morrow. I would much rather do this than make a furious onslaught upon an evil, or supposed evil, fancy I had demolished it, and then find shortly afterwards that it had obtained additional vitality, and was thriving perhaps more freely and actively than in its previous state of existence. The experience of the Scott act and local option in the United States warns us that in this matter we should proceed with some deliberation.

#### Origin of Referendum.

Then I want to spend a few moments in considering the origin of the referendum as a temperance movement. I speak now of the referendum as distinct from the plebiscite. It is said by those who do not like the present party in power that we have invented the referendum to get us out of difficulties. Why, I cannot claim the paternity, the Liberal party cannot claim the paternity, of this measure of reform. The referendum originated in the Senate of the Dominion of Canada. You will find the first expression of approval of this kind of legislation brought down by Mr. Vidal on the 7th day of March, 1875.

I have here the report of the Senate committee, presented by Senator Vidal in 1875. But perhaps I should preface this by saying that in 1874 and 1875 an unusual number of petitions were presented to the House of Commons and to the Senate also asking prohibitory legislation. There were petitions signed by nearly 100,000 individual names, there were petitions from many municipalities, from the Legislatures of the Provinces, one from this Legislature. These petitions were referred to a committee of the House of Commons on one side and a committee of the Senate on the other.

#### Proposed to Consult the People.

The concluding paragraph of the report is as follows:—"That should the Government not feel satisfied that the indication of public opinion afforded by the numerous petitions presented to Parliament is sufficient to justify the early introduction of such a law, it would be desirable to submit the question to the decision of the people by taking a vote of the electors thereon as soon as practicable."

This was in March, 1875. This view of the proper procedure to take in such cases became somewhat more decisive in time. Members of this House who have followed this question during the last 24 years will remember that in September, 1875, a Dominion convention was held in Montreal, at which there were representatives from all parts of the Dominion, representatives of all churches and from all classes. A few days prior to the meeting of that convention the Ontario Prohibitory League met in Toronto and through its President addressed to the people remarks which I am now going to quote.

The President was Mr. Robert McLean,

who said:—"The question of prohibition is one that requires the greatest consideration on the part of any Government, however strong, before deciding to put a prohibitory law on the statute book. It is agreed on all hands that such a law to be effective must have an undoubtedly strong public sentiment in favor of the law and its rigid enforcement. What, then, is the best method of ascertaining what public opinion is on this most important question? Some propose making it a test question at the polls. The experience of the past shows that very little dependence could be placed on the result of such a test. So many side issues would arise regarding men and measures that the question of prohibition would in many cases be lost sight of or be subordinated to some other issue. Others propose that a plebiscite be taken, thus affording each elector an opportunity of saying yea or nay to that question, irrespective of any other question of public policy. This would still leave the law to be passed upon by Parliament, which might or might not be done. The best way"—here is the point—"would be to ask Parliament to pass a stringent prohibitory law at its next session and submit it for the ratification of the electors of the Dominion at the next general election."

#### Ratification Favored.

Now, this is the origin of the referendum on the question of prohibition, in the form in which we now have it. The convention which met at Montreal consisted of 285 delegates. All classes were represented. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Sherbrooke sent his approval in a letter to Secretary Gates; the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manitoba also sent a sympathetic letter. Representatives were there from every Province in the Dominion except British Columbia. The convention was in session for several days. A Committee on Resolutions was appointed. This is the resolution adopted by the convention in 1875:—

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