

MACMASTER AND PROHIBITION.

(To the Editor of the Witness.)

Sir,—Sir Leonard Tilley, in my time, has been regarded as the veteran temperance representative in the House of Commons. He is known throughout Canada as a life-long temperance advocate. He secured the passage of a Prohibitory Liquor Act in New Brunswick, which proved a failure and was repealed within a year because public opinion was not strong enough to sustain it. I mentioned this fact at Alexandria to show the unwisdom of attempting to enforce a prohibitory act in the country generally until public opinion was strong enough to sustain it. Now you say:

"If Mr. Macmaster had quoted Sir Leonard Tilley on points in favor of prohibition as he did on points not in favor of immediate prohibition, he would not have misled his audience." I deny that I misled my audience; but let us examine the matter a little and see if you have not misled your readers.

I stated correctly the pith of Sir Leonard's speech on the subject of prohibition and I challenge you to publish the speech and let your readers judge between us. Take the following sentences, for instance:

Sir Leonard said, "Never since I have entered public life, have I voted, nor do I intend to vote, against the principle of prohibition."

"I believe in prohibition; I believe it will yet come in Canada; but I believe it would be the greatest injury to the permanent success of prohibition were there such a law enacted to-day, because I know from the experience of the past that it could not be successfully carried out."

I said in my Alexandria speech—and your report shows it—that I was willing to vote for prohibition when public opinion would sustain such a measure, and I also stated that I thought that question should be determined by a plebiscite or vote of the whole people at one time, and that when the people decided to have prohibition it should be adopted. You were good enough to say that this means prohibition when I "think fit"; but I think it means prohibition when the people themselves think fit. I explained to the audience that

"There are many things to be considered in connection with such a measure—the revenue of the country, the vested rights of individuals, and the interests of the country and society as a whole."

Now, you say, I imply by this sentence "that there are certain considerations that stand in the way of prohibition." I imply nothing of the kind, and the man would be nothing less than a mountebank who would discuss this question from a public point of view without pointing out that when prohibition is adopted there will be a heavy loss to the revenue that must be made up in some way. Is not that a question to be considered by the most ardent supporters of prohibition? You may not think it worth consideration, but whoever has to balance the ledger of Canada will have to consider it.

Again you say, "In the very speech from which Mr. Macmaster quotes, Sir Leonard Tilley declared that 'The loss of revenue which would result from the enforcement of a prohibitory law he regarded as a feather's weight in the argument. We might give up the revenue to-morrow, and if he thought the country was ready he would be only too happy as Finance Minister to devise ways and means to make the loss good.'"

You have not quoted Sir Leonard correctly, you have jumbled two sentences into one and cut the head and tail off each. Here is what Sir Leonard did say:

"Of course the ex-Finance Minister and myself would naturally look to the matter of revenue, but that, in my judgment, is but a feather's weight in the scale when compared to the beneficial effects that would follow the practical working of prohibition. I would vote for it most cheerfully, and as Finance Minister prepare ways and means to make up any deficiency that would arise if we were in a position to say that if such a law were enacted it would be sustained."

Sir Leonard would not allow the question of revenue to stand in the way, but he would have to "consider" or "look to" it, all the same, and prepare ways and means as well to make up the deficiency. But the radical difficulty with Sir Leonard was that public opinion was not strong enough to sustain a prohibitory act. Unfortunately, you did not quote Sir Leonard correctly.

But you add "Why did Mr. Macmaster raise this question of revenue as an objection, in view of this declaration of Sir Leonard Tilley whom he probably regards as a great authority on questions of finance." I did not raise this question of revenue as an "objection" to prohibition but as one of the questions that must be considered with it. But I did say, "The country should make sacrifices for the benefits that would result from it ('prohibition')."

But Sir Leonard said more: "I say," said he, "that I will be prepared to record my vote on any occasion in favor of prohibition, when we can say honestly that the public sentiment of Canada is so strong that we will be in a position to enforce it. But from my experience of what has taken place in the past I cannot help being convinced that we are not to-day in that position. If a prohibitory law were enacted to-morrow I am satisfied it could not be enforced, and nothing could do more damage to the cause of prohibition than the enactment of a law, followed by its non-enforcement and ultimate repeal."

So said Sir Leonard in 1884. Now the passage from Sir Leonard, which you say I should have quoted you have misquoted, and the passages from the same speech that justify the views I expressed on this subject to my constituents you have left out.

DONALD MACMASTER.
Montreal, Nov. 16th, 1886.

MR. MACMASTER AND PROHIBITION.

Mr. Macmaster's defence of his attitude on prohibition is not a very happy one. No one ever denied that Sir Leonard Tilley is a veteran temperance man, but discouraged by defeat there is no longer any fight in him. If our voters wish to know who the prohibition fighters of to-day are in the House of Commons they should read the list of those who voted in favor of immediate prohibition. Mr. Macmaster quotes the following sentence from the Witness: If Mr. Macmaster had quoted Sir Leonard Tilley on points in favor of prohibition as he did in points not in favor of immediate prohibition he would not have misled his audience. By separating it from the preceding sentences Mr. Macmaster would lead the readers of his letter to suppose that we had charged him with misleading his audience regarding Sir Leonard's views on the expediency of immediate prohibition.

The sentence is a portion of that part of the article dealing with Mr. Macmaster's statement regarding the revenue of the country, and its meaning is clear in that connection, namely, that had Mr. Macmaster quoted Sir Leonard Tilley with regard to the revenue question as he quoted him with regard to other questions, that he would not have misled his audience into believing that there would be some difficulty about the revenue of the country if prohibition were enacted. Mr. Macmaster's ruse of setting up a straw man and knocking it down is as old as partisan discussion. Mr. Macmaster next accuses us of misquotation. He says: "You have jumbled two sentences 'into one, and cut the head and tail off 'each.' We are not in the habit of misquoting, either fortunately or 'unfortunately,' as our readers very well know. We give the truth so far as we know it. Mr. Macmaster will find our quotation from Sir Leonard Tilley's speech word for word in the Gazette's report of that speech, which is quite as likely to be an exact statement of what he said, as the Hansard report, from which Mr. Macmaster, presumably, corrects us, seeing the Hansard reports are revised and modified before publication. In any case there is no material difference between the two reports. There are much greater differences between Mr. Macmaster and the prohibitionists of Glengarry.

PROHIBITION,

AND THE MEMBER FOR GLENGARRY.

(To the Editor of the Witness.)

SIR.—In your issue of Monday, the 15th inst., you deal editorially with the member for our county and his attitude on the Prohibition question. I take it for granted that no personal or political differences would lead you to treat an opponent unfairly. It is because in my humble judgment your editorial so treats Mr. Macmaster that I take the liberty of offering a few observations on your article.

One of your contentions is that in the past Mr. Macmaster did not represent the sentiment of the county on prohibition. Granted, but let this be borne in mind that when he was elected the question was not before him or the county. The adoption of the Scott Act was not even mooted. The sentiment of the county was not known. To represent an unknown quantity would, you will admit, be a difficulty. Mr. Macmaster might be excused for not anticipating in the early part of 1884 the county's verdict on the question in October of the same year. When a veteran temperance worker, to whom I wrote about beginning an agitation for the adoption of the Scott Act, wrote back, "The largeness of your project is only surpassed by the greatness of your faith. We may consider it, but I see no hope," you would not expect a young politician, who, confessedly, had not considered the question, to support as the sentiment of his constituents a position so advanced that experienced workers in the cause of temperance pronounced it then visionary and utopian.

You will surely admit that the views of a public man on any question, and especially a social question, may undergo a change. Mr. Macmaster's not supporting prohibition in the past is no ground for concluding that he will not support it in the future. It is with the present and the future we have to do. In a letter to me, bearing date December 8th, 1883, he says, speaking of this question: "I have not considered the question fully, and I am willing to learn." The temperance workers of this county

are satisfied that our member has been a diligent student of this question. I think, Mr. Editor, you ought to be in a position to share their satisfaction.

I was of the deputation of the County Alliance that waited on both political parties. I listened to Mr. Macmaster's earnest statement when dealing with the question. To me his words, which I took down as they were uttered, have but one meaning—they commit him squarely to prohibition. "I am ready to do everything in my power for temperance. I will vote for a fair and rational measure of prohibition whenever the country is ready for it." Now, Mr. Macmaster is a public man; the future, if he is spared, has great possibilities for him. I cannot imagine him saying one thing and meaning another. I have known him somewhat intimately for over nine years. I have never known him to be worse than his word. I am not aware that here, where he spent his boyhood, his promises are discounted.

You say further that in the promise he gave, he charges us by implication, with "advocating" unfair and irrational measures of prohibition. That cannot be, we submitted no measure, hence it could not be pronounced fair or unfair, rational or irrational—we merely submitted the general principle, and to it Mr. Macmaster very cordially assented.

Again you are clearly of the opinion that the member for Glengarry is in favor of delay—"when the country is ready for it," may to him, you judge, be a time in the dim and distant future. Now he said, "that in this country we were clearly entitled to something better than the Scott Act," we are ready for prohibition, he admits, and to ascertain the sentiment of the country at large he suggests that a plebiscite be taken, and he is prepared to "assist and facilitate" such a step in order to ascertain the sentiment of the country. That to me seems fair, and does not indicate a desire to procrastinate. As temperance men, we ought to be willing to have the vote of the country polled on the question. I am confident it would be overwhelmingly in our favor. That would settle beyond controversy the question, "Is the country ready for it?"

Still further you find fault with Mr. Macmaster, because he said "the revenue of the country would have to be considered." Is not that a matter of fact? How to raise millions of revenue, to meet the falling off, when prohibition is the law of the land, will assuredly be a matter for consideration. Undoubtedly we will be the gainers, when we cease as a people to squander on drink five dollars that we may collect one as revenue. But after the change, the question where we are going to get that one will remain, the answer, certainly, will not be difficult. And finally you object to Mr. Macmaster's allusion to "the vested rights of individuals." In Glengarry we did not consider that liquor sellers had any vested rights in the traffic, they were selling by virtue of a contract with the public. That contract was not interfered with. When the license year expired the contract ended with its vested rights. Mr. Macmaster's contention is "that the question of vested rights is to be dealt with in a fair, just and equitable manner." That is just what we want—if there is justice and equity in giving compensation in any case, let it be done. Our cause is just. In achieving its triumph, we must not be less than just. So earnest a prohibitionist as the Hon. S. H. Blake is an advocate of compensation. The other day in Toronto he signified his willingness to give \$5,000 for that end. Mr. Macmaster said that "prohibition was a great boon and that to gain it the country should be willing to make sacrifices." And surely if justice and equity demand compensation it would be injustice to refuse it.

In conclusion permit me to say that I believe the strength of the temperance sentiment in our county is owing in no small measure to the able and consistent advocacy of the Witness. And that at the present stage of the prohibition movement the interests so dear to us all can be better served by a generous acceptance of Mr. Macmaster's allegiance to the cause, an allegiance that I know to be earnest and sincere, than by columns of criticisms calculated to detract from the value of his support.

ALEX. MACGILLIVRAY.
The Munsie, Williamstown, Nov. 13, 1886.

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THE MEMBER FOR GLENGARRY.

It almost seems as if the Prohibitionists would be driven into nominating their own candidates in every constituency. The present course of taking pledges from the party candidates is not satisfactory, as little reliance can be placed upon promises which are often vague and unsatisfactory if not practically non-committal. Take Glengarry, for instance. In this county there are two candidates, Mr. Purcell, the Liberal, and Mr. Macmaster, the Conservative. Mr. Purcell readily gave an out-and-out promise to support prohibition, without any conditions or suppositions or considerations. Mr. Macmaster gave a promise to vote for prohibition when the county was ready for it, and providing it was a fair measure, fair to the liquor makers, who, he thinks, ought to be compensated, and so on, and would vote in favor of a plebiscite on the question. It will be seen that Mr. Purcell's pledge is on the face of it the most satisfactory. Mr. Purcell's political foes say, however, that he is not to be depended upon; that his record is a bad one. Some Liberals at least agree with them. The Conservatives, therefore, claim that the Prohibitionists should support Mr. Macmaster, who they think can be relied upon to keep his promise. They say that Mr. Macmaster is not a teetotaler, but is a man of character. They think they know all about Mr. Macmaster in Glengarry. The fullest assurance of faith, however, in Mr. Macmaster living up to his promises amounts to nothing, for he has made no promises except that he will do what he thinks best, and his parliamentary record shows that personally he is not in favor of temperance. We have before shown how he voted against immediate prohibition in 1884. Late in April, 1885, some months after his own constituency had passed the Scott Act by a majority of over 400, he with fifty-seven other Conservatives and four Liberals voted down a motion for a second reading of Mr. Jamieson's bill to amend the Scott Act. During the last session, on May 12th, Mr. Blake, in the absence of Mr. Jamieson, moved that the bill to amend the Scott Act be placed on the list of Government orders; fourteen prohibitionist Conservatives voted for the motion, but Mr. Macmaster voted against it. Mr. Macmaster knew then as well as he knows now the will of the constituency with regard to prohibition, and especially the Scott Act, but he voted against prohibition. What Glengarry wants and what every prohibition county wants is a representative who will support prohibition every time the question is raised in the House. Mr. Macmaster is not that man by any means. We have taken some pains to obtain reliable information as to the character of the Liberal candidate. From Conservatives and Reformers alike we have received