

advocate the establishment of an Anti-Tea League; but we do advocate the alteration of our fiscal arrangements to meet the case. The beverage, like many other beverages, is not a bad thing when not taken to excess. But is it, or is it not, taken to excess, just as much as intoxicating drinks? Facts answer in the affirmative. One of the stock arguments against the lowering of the imposts upon intoxicants is that they are not only luxuries as distinguished from necessaries, but luxuries, when taken in excess, of a dangerous kind. Now, it is admitted by high medical authorities that heavy tea drinking destroys the stamina, induces indigestion and dyspepsia, and brings about enfeeblement of body and mind; and it would be instructive to get the additional testimony of New Zealand doctors as to the cause of certain complaints peculiar to colonial women. The system of "visiting," so dear to the hearts of all New Zealand women, and which is carried on to such an extent, unparalleled by any other country, is, undoubtedly, responsible for the growth of the habit. Apart from the consideration of the loss of revenue which must follow the confiscation of hotel licenses, it is right that the Colonial Treasurer should swell his next year's Budget by putting the consumer of tea—as much a luxury as intoxicants—under further contribution. The danger is growing, and self-preservation calls for resistance and safeguard!

### The Governor's Speech.

Considered as a mere perfunctory formality, containing, perhaps, a vague outline of proposed legislation and reform—to which a close adherence is not necessary—no very great exception can be taken to the Governor's Speech. To our mind it is more remarkable for its omissions than for what it contains, the most striking of which is the absence of any intimation of a revision of the tariff, and a reduction of the duty on the necessaries of life. How far any such reduction is desired by the wage-earning classes is, of course, an open question; but as a matter of precedent and a question of political ethics (if politics have any), the existence of a surplus and an improved financial condition would seem to warrant it. If the funds to provide work for the unemployed and to acquire land for settlement are to be raised by Customs duties and taxes on "labour products," a great deal of discontent will certainly be created. As closer settlement and the extension of any public works will greatly enhance land values, it would be only fair that a proportion of the money required should be raised by a small addition to the land-tax. It is also singular that while the contemplated alteration or addition to the currency—by the issue of a limited number of State-notes—is quite an open secret, and was most palpably hinted at by the Colonial Treasurer, no reference is made to it. The strength of the Ministerial party is most distinctly emphasised by the enunciation of this purely political and somewhat reactionary pabulum, which could hardly offend the most rabid Conservative or alarm the most timid fundholder. The Socialistic ideas with which the Ministry have so frequently been charged are, in this case, most conspicuous by their entire absence: Realizing that they owe their present position to the votes and influence of the various schools of advanced thinkers, the Government have evidently resolved to follow the advice of St. Paul, and to make an attempt to be "all things to all men." But, however, suitable

the precept may be in matters of religion, and to things celestial, as an experiment in practical politics its success is doubtful. In endeavouring to mollify and propitiate its adversaries, the Government will certainly offend its friends.—The various "sops" offered to the Trade Unions, Single Tax, Temperance, and Socialist sections of the community, are but a modicum of what was expected, and are occasioning most hostile and unfavourable comment. The present political situation illustrates one of the most objectionable features of "Party Government," viz., "that unless the party in power have a substantial majority they can effect nothing." When they have the power, a sense of security lessens their inclination to adopt or attempt to carry an advanced programme.

### The Juvenile Cigarette Fiend.

The infantile cigarette fiend—what shall we do with him? If you pass along a main street or are in the neighbourhood of a state school about dinner time or when the day's task is finished you are bound to meet him; the pale-faced mite, with an impudent stony stare, and a cigarette in his mouth, sucking at the weed with the same dogged persistence that distinguished a similar mouth-exercise only a very few years ago. What, we repeat, is to be done with this unfortunate specimen of our present day free-and-easy civilisation? A publican who supplies a child under thirteen years of age with a pint of supper beer is guilty of an infringement of the law, but the tobaccoist who supplies children with penn'orths of cigarettes is in the eyes of the law a respectable member of society.

To those of our readers who are parents, we would direct attention to our children's page, and invite their co-operation. The Little FAIR PLAYER'S Guild has been started with a twofold object, namely, to help the young to pass their evenings pleasantly and profitably, and (chiefly) to arouse and broaden their sympathy for children and old people who are sick and otherwise less fortunate than themselves. We are starting a series of competitions for prizes, which will take the form of valuable books chosen specially to suit the age and sex of the winners. All articles sent in will be sent to the children's wards of hospitals and similar institutions.

The London Manufacturing Company, whose advertisement appears in this issue, are well worthy of support. Their Oxford Blue and Extract of Soap will be found second to none by householders, while their Sauces are delicious.

Mr. Alfred L. Levy, formerly of Melbourne, has taken the Central Hotel, Wellington. Mr. Levy for some time had the railway refreshment stalls and other popular places of public convenience in Melbourne, during which period his business capacity and genial manners won him a host of friends. He also occupied a prominent position during the boom, but, like many others, came out the looser. We wish him every success in his new venture.

The Hon. J. G. Ward, in his Oamaru speech, made certain statistical quotations in reference to the private wealth of New Zealand which, if not comforting, are at least interesting; and to the reflective mind give rise to the speculation. Whether the progress or welfare of a nation is not something totally distinct from the mere accumulation of wealth in the aggregate. He stated: "That the net private wealth of the colony in 1885 was £125,000,000; and in 1893, £155,000,000, and consequently the increase during that interval was £300,000,000." The average amount per head of population (man, woman, and child) was in 1885, £217 per head; and in 1893, £287 per head—roughly calculated. With these figures before us, placed in comparison with the undeniable "hardening of times," the increase of poverty, the diminution of profits, the intensification of the struggles for life, and the abnormal decrease of opportunity to obtain employment, since 1885, it cannot certainly be claimed that—so far as human welfare is concerned—any progress has been made. The great majority of "individuals are worse off."