

WEDNESDAY.

Evidently it is 'the thing' this session to commence the afternoon session by a wrangle over some utterly unimportant appointment or official. This time it is a Mr Bezar, and a vast deal of time and temper were as usual wasted over him to no purpose. Then the unemployed employed the House, and Major Steward and Mr Seddon argued considerably but uninterestingly. Major Steward is deadly dull, and Mr Seddon was too calm to be entertaining. The Premier shines in debate when he gets heated, not otherwise. Earnshaw determined to keep it before everyone that he is the only real friend of the 'orony' -anded son of toil.' It is perhaps because Mr Earnshaw has been 'left' out of Ministerial employment that he rails so loudly. 'Earnshaw is noisy,' some one said in the gallery, 'but it is the noise of the empty barrel.'

Talking of barrels brings us to the interesting part of Wednesday's proceedings—Shall Bellamy's go? Such was in brief the motion, and very hot were the arguments for and against.

Mr Mackintosh, who *should* be dry, said he had not had a drink for four years, and was indignant to a degree at the prospect of not being able to get one at Bellamy's for Heaven knows how long.

Major Harris spoke well. He reminded one slightly of the platform prohibitionist, but only slightly, for he was never vulgar or coarse as most prohibition platform orators are. It is hard to imagine Harris blushing, but he achieved it when the House laughed at his letter from a lady.

Mr Meredith's dark and sinister hints at the connection between Bellamy's and stone wall garrulity aroused little He Hem to a passion of virtuous indignation. There was a manifest tendency to play to the gallery over the question. Members said what they thought would sound and look well rather than what they thought.

Mr Crowther's remark that nobody would stop him having his whiskey conjured up visions of the entire W.C.T.U. freezing on to Mr C.'s coat tails. It was a very clever bit of work on the part of the 'Commensense Crowther,' as he is called, to ring in that fine sentiment that he was too proud to drink at other folk's expense. It was asking, and in the case of Mr Crowther true.

The faces of the Bellamyites were a study when the result was announced, but they comforted themselves when Mr Seddon gave notice that he would move the 'Bellamy's

Spiritual Liquor Prohibition Bill' next day. 'We'll squash that,' was their gleeful comment. Nothing more of interest till the adjournment.

THURSDAY.

Mirabile dictu! Began business to-day without the usual childish squabbles. Mr Smith, of Christchurch, bubbling over with enthusiasm for the repression of Bellamy's, asks in an emotional manner, 'Why, oh, why, is the wicked traffic still going on?' Sir Maurice nicely and indirectly reproves the impetuosity of this member of the Smith family. The Bill to make Bellamy's a mere spiritless *roy/s* passes its first reading quietly, but trouble is brewing for the totalitarians. The best Bill introduced into Parliament for a very long time is the feature of the evening. Sir Robert Stout's Gaming Act commands interested admiration of entire gallery. Captain Russell shows, as he always does, that on broad non-party questions his interest and his influence can always be relied on. Excellent man, Captain Russell, and first-rate speaker. His speech on the Gaming Act is full of practical commonsense—the speech of a man who has a knowledge of men and things, one who believes in restrictive but not in grandmotherly legislation. Lawry is a trifle tedious, as he generally is. Sir Robert's evident desire is to get *some* reform established, and he won more converts than Mr Crowther by his willingness to arrange matters. General opinion expressed is that men—and women—will gamble a little, and that gambling on 'tote' is much less injurious than betting with bookmakers. Hogg makes a very foolish speech, a somewhat pig headed speech in fact. Finally the committal is set down to this day week.

Mr Hutchieson, of Danedin, is very much in earnest concerning the abolition of the 'tote,' and he spoke earnestly. Certainly Mr Hutchieson does not look like a turfite, but if he would attend a couple of great race meetings—one where the tote is working and one where bookmakers are raging—he would more than probably recognise that of two evils the totalitator is infinitely the less.

FRIDAY.

Though to an outsider like myself, the Colonel Frasercum-Speakership matter appears to have been overdone by the Opposition, there are manifestly a good many people who believe that no self-respecting Opposition could have sat down under what appears to have been—well, shall we

say a stretching of ministerial prerogative. The whole of to-day was given up to a long and vindictive debate on the subject. Sir Robert Stout was in better form than he has been this session. His speech produced a very visible effect, and more than one Seddonite must have murmured, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Stoutite,' but perhaps because less qualified members of the Opposition followed, perhaps because of Mr Seddon's artful appeal for fair play, it remained at almost. Lawyer Bell is a very objectionable speaker, and alienated many who might on this point have sympathised with his leader. Everyone knows the effect produced on one by a nagging lawyer in court. Mr Bell does not leave the shop behind, and he nags in a fashion that rasps the nerves of even those who follow his party. He Hem Smith is in a different manner as irritating. He must speak on every subject, and though one can often laugh at his speeches, one grows most heartily tired of the man and his vapourings. Dr Newman's speech was distinctly clever and smart. The doctor always seems to yours truly as if he imagined himself playing Randolph Churchill to Mr Seddon's Gladstone. Amongst the most sensible speeches were those of one of the Government supporters, who admitted that the Government had made a mistake, but that the fuss made over the matter was excessive. The Premier was not unnaturally for a choleric man out of temper with the bating he had endured, and beginning hotly was soon 'tearing political passion to tatters.' His attack was furious in the extreme, and the rough eloquence of which Mr Seddon is master when properly worked up brought back all waverers. At last it was all over, and it is to be hoped the matter may be decently buried. Quite enough time has been wasted on the affair to last through the session.

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