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The Week in Review

The elections have resulted, as everyone anticipated they would, in a very substantial victory for Sir Joseph Ward's party. Nor is this result likely to be seriously affected by the second ballot. There will be a good many changes on both sides of the House. The most serious from the Government point of view is the defeat of Mr McNab, the Minister for Lands. Mr McNab has stood uncompromisingly for leasehold as opposed to freehold, and many will regard his failure at the polls as being a decisive indication of the preference of the farming community for the freehold principle. Others attribute his defeat to the unpopularity of the new dairy regulations among the small farmers, and especially, to the attitude Mr McNab took up in connection with the Meikle grant. However this may be, there can be no question that the Government has lost a capable and conscientious administrator, and probably his retirement from the political arena will only be temporary. The Liberals have also lost Mr Symes in Stratford, Mr A. L. P. Fraser, in Napier, Mr Hornsby in Wairarapa, Mr Wood in Palmerston North, Mr Izard in Wellington North, Mr Tanner in Avon, Mr Major in Patea, Mr C. M. Grey in Christchurch North, Mr Stevens in Manawatu, and Mr Dillon in Hawke's Bay. On the other hand, they have found new recruits in Mr Glover, of Auckland Central, Mr Vigor Brown of Napier, and Mr Reed of the Bay of Islands, all of them men likely to do much useful service.

Amongst the new men on the Opposition side of the House, we have Mr Hine of Stratford, Mr Pearce of Patea, Mr Duncan of Wairau, and Mr Anderson of Matura. They should all prove capable supporters of Mr Massey. It is worthy of note that none of the retiring Opposition members who sought reelection failed to retain their seats on the first ballot. Apart from the second ballots, there will be at least 10 new members, or five more than in the Parliament of 1905. Mr Massey has expressed himself as distinctly pleased with the results, which he describes as very encouraging. He thinks the public generally has shown appreciation of the work done by the Opposition, and that to a corresponding extent people are losing confidence in the Government. Sir Joseph Ward is also very pleased, and he regards the results as exceedingly satisfactory, and, as showing that the people fully appreciate the work done by the Government, and have every confidence in its policy of progressive development of the country in the interests of the people. It is gratifying to find that both Sir Joseph Ward and Mr Massey are equally pleased with the elections, and that they both think they point to the confidence of the people in their respective policies. It reminds one of the xxix Articles of the Church of England, of which the King remarked, when he first saw them, that they had been so carefully devised that every man on reading them would take them to be for himself, whatever his views might be. Others may think that most of our laws also resemble the Articles, in that the Articles were defined by a witty divine as the forty stripes save one laid on the backs of the English people.

The real interest in the elections for the bulk of the voters lay in the licensing poll. There were many reasons why this should have been so. In the first place,

the candidates had gone to the country without any very definite political programme. To many people the difference between the two parties was the difference 'twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Many voters manifested the greatest apathy as to who would be elected. The election to most meant the retaining or closing of the public houses. Also, in many quarters, there has been a growing dissatisfaction with our present system of tied houses and trade monopoly, and it was felt by many, who are by no means total abstainers, that reform of some kind was needed. The question also offered a definite issue, and had all the fighting element so dear to the heart of most electors. A battle royal had been waged for months past between the rival parties, and every student of human nature knows that there is no attraction so great as that presented by a good fight of any kind. An important cricket match, Yorkshire v. Cambridge University, was once stopped by universal consent of players and spectators alike that everyone might watch a particularly exciting dog fight.

Apart from these considerations, there must undoubtedly be reckoned the increasing interest manifested on all sides in matters of social reform, amongst which temperance reform occupies a most place. Messrs. Rountree and Sherwell's book on the subject has been widely read, and has done much to stimulate public thought. They point out that prohibition is most likely to be successful in sparsely populated places, and where the No-License district is adjacent to a License area. It is interesting to note in this connection that the most heavy polling for No-License took place in the residential suburbs of our large cities. On the question as to whether No-License would be a success in large centres, opinion, even amongst ardent temperance reformers, is sharply divided. Men like Sir Robert Anderson, with large practical experience of licensing affairs, and students of the working of prohibition, like the authors we have quoted, have expressed the conviction that in large cities the strict enforcement of prohibition laws is impracticable in the present state of public opinion. On the other hand, many persons claiming equal experience believe that prohibition laws could be enforced were the police sufficiently vigilant and the penalties for infraction sufficiently heavy. However this may be, there can be little doubt that the better class residential areas have decided against licensed houses, and even amongst moderate men there is a very general feeling in favour of reform in many matters connected with our hotels.

The second ballot is likely to have a fair trial, no fewer than 24 electorates having failed to elect a candidate by the absolute majority required by law. This is considerably more than was anticipated when the bill was passed. It was originally proposed that any candidate leading by over 500 votes should be declared elected, and it is to be regretted that this clause should have been thrown out by the Legislative Council. The expense to the country will be considerable. The Premier, in his forecast before the election, reckoned on not more than 12 second ballots at the outside, and he computed the cost at £2000. On this basis we may assume that the 24 will mean the expenditure of something like double that amount. Added to this there is the dislocation of public business to be considered, and the

fact that many may be prevented by various causes from recording a second vote. The second ballot is admittedly an experiment, and it is, perhaps, just as well that its merits and demerits should be put to a severe test.

Mr. F. H. Broderick, of Wellington, who has just returned from a six months' trip to Europe, has given a "Dominion" reporter a most interesting account of the rapid progress being made by the Belgians. Brussels, he tells us, is rapidly becoming one of the largest centres of manufacture in Europe, especially for fashionable goods. This he attributes to the lightness of taxation as compared with that which burdens the factories of Paris. Then again, Belgium is protected by all the Powers, and thus has no expense for either an army or a navy. The factories are run on the most up-to-date lines, and no expense is spared in securing the latest and most efficient machinery. Mr. Broderick pays a high compliment to the temperate habits of the Belgians. This he attributes to the fact that spirits are seldom called for at the cafes, and the national drinks are light lager beer and light wines. Wages are not high, but living is cheap, and everyone that he met seemed to be happy and contented. It is pretty universally agreed that Continental nations know how to enjoy themselves, whilst they all consider that the English take their pleasures sadly. One has only to compare a French holiday party in the Bois de Boulogne, or a Spanish at San Sebastian, with an Easter Monday excursion to Margate or the Crystal Palace to realise that there is much truth in the assertion that with all our material blessings the faculty of getting real enjoyment out of life has been denied us.

It would appear that the perennial Balkan question is still far from settled. As far as the Orient railway is concerned, the original exorbitant demand in the matter of compensation has been greatly reduced, and no difficulty is likely to occur over this. The danger spot just now is Servia. Austria, it will be remembered, annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, and this was bitterly resented by both Servia and Montenegro. These two States have been massing their troops along the Austrian border, and warlike demonstrations have been made by both sides. But Russia and the Powers have uttered remonstrances against this threatening attitude, and it is unlikely that the Servians will push things to extremes unless compelled to do so by Austria. Turkey, also, is not wholly satisfied with the state of affairs, and is inclined to insist on the discussion of the status of Bulgaria, Bosnia, and Herzegovina being referred to the Powers, a proposal which is stoutly resisted by Austria. As, however, Turkey is supported by England, France, and Russia, while Austria can only count on Germany, it is not very probable that serious complications will arise. But a false step on either side might yet set the Balkans in a blaze, and only the most cautious and wise diplomacy can avert a general European war.

The mention of Bulgaria reminds one of many famous sayings popularly connected with its history. Gladstone was supposed to have coined the phrase "bag and baggage" for his famous speech on the Bulgarian atrocities, though it really comes from Shakespeare. Similarly "Peace with honour" is commonly attributed to Lord Beaconsfield in connection with the Treaty of Berlin, though in reality it occurs in Shakespeare's Coriolanus. "The unspeakable Turk"

was borrowed by Mr. Gladstone from Carlyle, and Lord Rosebery took his famous phrase "Pretty Fanny's way" from "The Landstine Marriage" of Colman and Garrick. It is said to have to record that even Napoleon's description of the English as "A nation of shopkeepers" was not original, but was taken from Barere de Vieuzac. After this, we need not be surprised if some of our own Parliamentary orators steal a phrase now and then and pass it off as their own. They can quote distinguished precedents for the practice.

In sentencing a lad for breaking and entering, Mr Justice Cooper passed some very severe strictures on what he termed the pernicious literature of the penny dreadful type. Counsel who appeared for the boy had pleaded in extenuation that the crimes were due to his client's mind having been saturated with this class of fiction, and in commenting on the case, the judge expressed a hope that the day was not far distant when the sale of such books would be absolutely prohibited. He said that some time since at Napier he had several lads before him on 15 or 16 charges of larceny, and their ages ranged from 10 to 15. They had gone about the country following almost in detail the conduct of some of the characters in these penny dreadful novels, and their parents had found a large number secreted away. He had not the slightest doubt that the boys' downfall was due to the ease with which they were able to purchase this class of literature. His Honor characterised this penny dreadful stuff as the vilest class of literature that could be circulated in our midst, and added that men who sold such books were just as guilty of committing offences against the peace and credit of the community as the man who sold poison indiscriminately.

All this is, of course, very true, and books which tend to glorify crime and criminals are just as demoralising as Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" is said to have been in another direction. But Mr Birrell, in his charming monograph on Charlotte Brontë, has drawn attention to one very serious defect in this argument for prohibition as applied to literature. He says that Lord Macaulay, by his slashing review on Robert Montgomery's poems, caused people to lay aside "The Omnipresence of the Deity," but he failed to persuade them to take up "Paradise Lost." "It is easier," he goes on to say, "to teach the mob to throw a brickbat at a fool than to worship at the shrine of a saint; but it is a lesson not worth the teaching." The only real antidote to bad literature is the cultivation of a taste for whatsoever things are true, whatsoever are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and men who help to do this are the true reformers. At the recent manoeuvres of the territorial army at Home the general commanding the forces repealed the orders prohibiting the men from entering public houses, and placed them on their honour not to do so. The result was excellent. It is not the fashion nowadays, even amongst professing Christians, to quote St. Paul as an authority. His views on the Atonement were hopelessly at variance with the modern doctrine that the stern arm of the law cleanseth us from all sin. But his "more excellent way" of overcoming evil with good has much to recommend it, and the mere fact that a maxim occurs in the Bible should not by itself be sufficient to stultify it in the eyes of those who profess the Christian religion.

The Licensing Bill has passed the Commons by 250 votes to 113, and its fate in the House of Lords remains to be seen. Mr. Birrell has emphatically declared that if the Lords reject it they