

Licensed Victuallers' Page.

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THE PROHIBITION CONVENTION.

As indicated in the concluding lines of our article of last week, we propose to deal on the present occasion with a few of the salient points adduced by the leading members of the convention, which, as our readers are probably aware, was held at Dunedin during the early part of the present month, reports of which are to be found in the *Otago Daily Times* and the *Evening Star*, published in that city. In carefully reading these reports—which which may be accepted as accurate because they have not been contradicted—we find a serious and, in our opinion, unmerited charge made against the whole police force of this colony, who are charged with a gross neglect of duty, and to be working in the interests of the liquor rings of New Zealand. One of the speakers—Mr Andrew Thompson, of Port Chalmers—said: "The police took their key from the head of the department and shut at least one eye, sometimes two, to patent breaches of the law. And when charges were brought, the publican could easily obtain evidence that the drink was never sold." We assume, though Mr Thompson does not condescend to explain who it is, that the key was taken from the Premier of this Colony, who, up to a short time ago, was head of the Department. If so, the only construction to be placed on his assertion is that the Premier instructed the whole police force of the colony to strive to bring about no conviction against the publicans when charged with a breach of the law, even though that violation was, as Mr Thompson states, a "patent" breach of the Licensing Act. We think it safe to say that no reasonable person in New Zealand will suppose for one moment that the astute Premier would in any degree commit himself in the direction of placing his reputation in the hands of any member of the police force as insinuated. And taking a low estimate of the situation, the danger would be altogether too great for either the Premier or any subordinate head of the department to take. And for this reason. Members of the police force are frequently removed, or suspended, for alleged charges of various kinds, and smarting under real or imaginary grievances, would in some cases say that they acted under practical instructions to bring about the defeat of the ends of justice in connection with the liquor traffic. We know that a number of police officers have been removed from the police force during the time the present Alcoholic Liquors Sale Control Act has been in force. And does it not appear a strange commentary, significant in its very nature, that nearly the whole of those dismissals have been made on account of charges in relation to the liquor traffic, or for a personal violation of the law on behalf of the officers themselves. We have no hesitation in saying that either through a want of reliable information, or from an excess of zeal which outran all discretion, Mr Thompson has cast a most unmerited slander upon the head of the department, and in the same connection, upon the whole police force of this colony, which obtains no adequate or substantial qualification from his compliment paid to the police force of his particular locality (Port Chalmers). A careful enquiry from persons well qualified to judge, and a perusal of the official records of the police in the various Australasian colonies, satisfies us that for integrity and a faithful adherence to

duty, the police force of New Zealand compare favourably with that of any colony under the canopy which carries the Southern Cross, and we shall be surprised if some parliamentary enquiry is not asked for *re* the convention, which obtain their significance from the fact that they were made by a respectable citizen, at a duly organised meeting of an influential section of the community. We pass over for the present the resolution passed to obtain the services of two persons for every electorate, for the purpose of placing every person on the roll favourable to prohibition, in order to accurately gauge the strength of the party in each place; though on a future occasion we shall show that this proposal, if given effect to, is a direct violation of the principles of the ballot-box, principles which the prohibition party have theoretically declared should be held sacred and inviolate, and which they have emphatically charged those engaged in the liquor trade with shamefully disregarding. For the present we shall only touch upon one more matter declared at the convention, viz., that those engaged in the trade had their spies out in every direction. This is really "lovely," as coming from those who were regularly mixed up with and supported what was done in Sydenham and in Christchurch a short time ago. In the former place a number of young men were sent out from a church at the close of a Sabbath evening service and, according to the uncontradicted reports, were instructed to go to certain hotels and obtain drinks under the declaration that they were *bona fide* travellers. This, we understand, they succeeded in doing, and subsequently reported their success to one of the highest officials of the church, who in turn, a few days after, visited the stipendiary magistrate (who, according to *Hansard* report, was sick at the time), stated the case, and expressed the hope that he would be sufficiently well to sit on the case when it came up for hearing, as he (the official) had no faith in the J.P.'s of the place. It is further stated that the S.M. regretted his own illness, but mainly because he was not well enough to kick this chief of the spies out of his apartment. Then take another spy, who was subsequently tried for perjury. He was stationed in a window to watch the back entrance of one of the first-class houses in Christchurch; and in connection with his case he did obtain a verdict, but his evidence was so "shaky" that he was subsequently committed for trial for perjury. Verily, this convention was well qualified to deal with the question of spies.

TRADE TOPICS.

Toper: "What shall I take, doctor, to remove the redness of my nose?" Doctor: "Take nothing for three months."

"Didn't the doctor tell Drinkum to take only a thimbleful of whisky?"—"Yes; but Drinkum had a thimble made to order."

Mr H. Hunt, the Greyouth hotelkeeper, who committed suicide recently, died worth nearly £8,000. Some trouble about a certain coal mine seemed to effect his mind.

A petition is about to be circulated in the Wairarapa district praying for the removal of Mr T. Hutchinson, S.M., on the ground that confidence in his administration of justice has been shaken by so many appeals against his decisions being upheld.

In the appeal case from Woodville, where Henry Jull, publican, was convicted for selling during prohibited hours, the Chief Justice held that the sale being made by a servant, who had no authority to do so, and was merely in the bar for the purpose of cleaning it, the conviction must be quashed.

At Hokitika, the other night, the police visited one of the hotels. It was about the witching hour, when graveyards yawn, &c. They knocked at the door, but it was sometime before it was opened unto them. At last the boss answered the summons. He was picturesquely attired in a night-gown and a pair of boots. It was subsequently elicited that other garments were under the night-gown, but that is merely a matter of detail. Then the sergeant and his merry men waltzed in, and as they did so the oldest inhabitant, or one of them, rushed into the arms of the bobbies and pleaded hard to be allowed to go. Then a search for the others revealed a lot of boots sticking out from under the table. The boss hurriedly explained they were 'a job lot he had bought at auction,' but the bobbies possessing enquiring minds, continued to investigate. They seized one of the boots, hauled on it and, lo, it proved to have a man's foot in it. The rest of the man duly came to light. Further investigation showed that all the boots were attached to men. The boss tried to explain that the gentlemen were lodgers, and that as all the beds were full they were sleeping under the table. It remains to be seen what the magistrate may think of this yarn.—*The Spectator*. [The night-gown, as a "point," takes the cake.]

Donalt had done something for the meenister, and said the meenister—"Donalt, ye shall have your glass of whisky, for I promised it; but, Donalt, I warn ye there's death i' the cup." Well, Donalt thought he would risk it, and be tossed off the spirit and water and put down the glass. "Deed, meenister, ye were grandly richt 'bout the death i' the cup, for, by me soul, ye've drown'd the millar!"

TAKEN TO HEART.—The temperance apostle was walking along the sidewalk, serene in the consciousness of his own goodness, when a well-dressed man stopped him and shook his hand. "Guess you don't remember me," said the well-dressed man. "Why—ah"—"Three years ago I attended one of your meetings and heard you draw a graphic picture of the able mechanic whose children went ragged, while the children of the saloon-keeper with whom he spent his wages were dressed in silks. The story fitted my case to a T." "And you reformed?" "Should say I did reform. Went into the saloon business myself."

In connection with the railway collision that occurred between a goods train from Balclutha to Gore and an excursion train (with 120 passengers) returning from Edendale, the *Otago Witness* remarks—"Many were the anathemas pronounced against prohibitionists when Balclutha was reached, and it was found that nothing could be obtained to warm the inner man. It is strange that no one thought it worth while to provide for the 140 cold and hungry mortals who would gladly have given 2s 6d for a meal and something hot. If the votes of those in the special train could reverse things, there is no doubt the Clutha hotels would be re-licensed to-morrow."

We make the following extract from an article, entitled "A Modern Tendency," and published in the *Thames Advertiser* of the 15th ult.—"In face of facts and figures, it is somewhat irritating to hear the statements often made by temperance orators, that the drink traffic is the main responsible for the distress existing in the colony. It can be seen, on reference to statistics, that the drink bill of the colony has fallen enormously during the last fifteen years—in 1880 it amounted to £6 12s per head, now it is £2 17s, and as poverty all this time has been on the increase, it seems to us that proof positive is afforded as to the incorrectness of the assertion. The Rev. Dr Elmslie, the well-known Presbyterian clergyman, who, in a paper recently read by him in Christchurch on "Some Poverty Problems urgently requiring Solution," touched the keynote of the reason for the increase in the amount paid in charitable aid, when he pointed out that the old spirit of self-reliance had in a great measure departed from the people."

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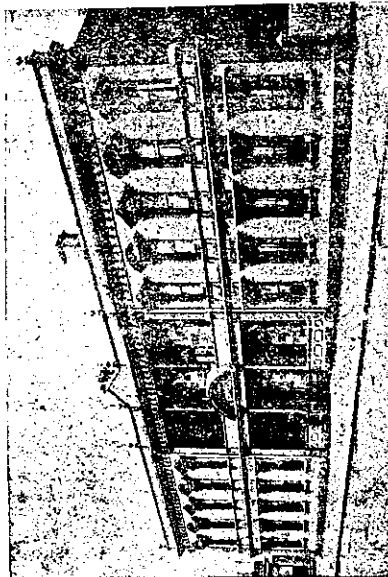
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