

The LICENSED VICTUALLERS

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TIME, GENTLEMEN, PLEASE!

THE question whether it would be advisable for the Auckland Licensing Committee to alter the hour of closing hotels and public-houses from ten o'clock to eleven o'clock is one that does not require much consideration from a Trade point of view. The members of the Trade would hail with satisfaction such an alteration, not on account of the amount of business which would accrue, but because they individually and collectively recognise that ten o'clock is too early for the requirements of the public. We suppose there is not one hotelkeeper in the Auckland district who is not asked every night, in the week to serve liquor after ten o'clock, and we dare say that very few publicans refuse to supply the thirsty souls, for each knows that, though he may be perfectly willing to close at the correct hour, his fellow tradesmen are taking the risk of a raid. Ten o'clock is altogether too early for the vast majority of citizens, and the consequence is that we have this after-hours business. If the hour of closing could be extended to eleven o'clock we believe this surreptitious trading would be put a stop to, for at the present time there is very little business after eleven o'clock even in the known "late" houses. At eleven o'clock most men are ready for home, and the publican would be ready to rigorously shut down at that hour. Eleven o'clock would give the people coming from places of amusement a chance to quench their thirst without any fear of being charged with being on licensed premises after closing time. Eleven o'clock would also suit railway and other travellers; in fact, it would suit the community all round far better than the ridiculously early hour of ten o'clock. If we turn to the cities and big towns of Australia we find eleven and half-past eleven to be the closing times. If we look at Wellington we see that the hotels are shut to non-residents at eleven o'clock. In the Old Country there is not much chance of the police making a successful raid after hours, because in London the houses shut at half-past twelve on every night except Saturday, when they are closed half an hour earlier. In all the big cities and towns the time is eleven or later, and in the rural districts it is eleven o'clock or earlier, at the option of the licensee. Why Auckland, the city with the largest population in the North Island, should be restricted to ten o'clock we fail to see. The hour is too early for the convenience of the inhabitants, who, if they want anything stronger than tea after ten, must creep round to a back door, enter stealthily, and in fear and trembling drink the modest half-pint or nip of whisky—that is, if they can get in. This sort of thing is degrading in the extreme, both to the public and the publican, and it partakes somewhat of an interference with the liberty of the subject to say, "Thou shalt not drink after ten o'clock, unless you take it home in a bottle." How is the change from ten o'clock to eleven to be compassed? If we had a real live Licensed Victuallers' Association in Auckland the question would be an easy one to answer. We believe there is an invertebrate body, with a nominal head and tail, which claims the title, but we want an association whose motto shall be "Deeds, not Words." Let the brewers and the publicans unite in demanding this necessary reform from the Licensing Committee; let the public lend willing aid to the efforts of the former,

and this extension of time will become an accomplished fact. Supineness and shilly-shally will obtain nothing, but a vigorous and united policy will prevail upon the Licensing Magistrates, who will see that the extension is in the best interests of the citizens. Ten o'clock is an unreasonable hour; eleven is a right and proper one. It will suit the public and it will suit the publican, and as the present is the occasion for a forward move, we say to the public and to the Trade, "Time, gentlemen, please!"

THE PREMIER'S TOUR IN WAIRARAPA

The Right Hon. the Premier has, during the past week, visited the Wairarapa district, and has obtained a "right royal reception" in every part of this large and important section of the colony. He has met the settlers in the various centres of population, he has received deputations representing the local bodies, and has satisfied all parties that he and his Government are imbued with an honest desire to aid the struggling settlers in the bush districts, and generally to aid the pioneer in their efforts to establish homes in the wilderness, recognising that the property of the colony largely depends on the efforts of those who are succeeding in turning a bush wilderness into happy homesteads, now largely "dotting the landscape."

The Premier has addressed a meeting attended by the most influential chiefs of the Wairarapa, he has propounded to them the policy of the Government concerning the dealing with native lands, and the proposed legislation affecting those lands, and his reception by the Natives has been not only cordial but enthusiastic in its nature. At the settlement of Hamua he was presented with an address which must have satisfied him that his proposed legislation was, in the opinion of the Natives, calculated to promote the best interests of the genuine European settlers and the Maoris alike. He and the party which accompanied him to Hamua were entertained at a sumptuous banquet, and the whole proceedings showed the great desire of the Natives to more closely cement the friendly relationship which exists in that part of the colony between the pakeha and the aboriginal owners of the soil. The school children of the place were all assembled in the reception hall, and in addressing them the Hon. Mr Walker (Minister of Education) expressed the great pleasure he experienced in seeing the children of both races congregated together in one school, embracing the opportunities offered by our national system of education.

During his visit the Premier addressed a large audience at Masterton, and in propounding the policy of the Government and in defending the administration thereof, he found his statements endorsed by an overwhelming majority of his vast audience. As a matter of fact he convinced his hearers that his Government did not believe in class legislation; that the legislation of his party was, and would be, broad enough to embrace all sections of the community, irrespective of creed, nationality, or social distinction; and in his declaration of these principles he was loudly and enthusiastically applauded. It was to be expected that representations would be made relative to the necessity for roads and bridges, and in reply to the requests the Premier said that it did not increase the general indebtedness of the colony if money was expended in such works as those indicated, because every bridge erected and every road made by the expenditure of public money was an asset to the colony more than sufficient to cover the cost of the respective constructions.

In the thriving district of Ekatahuna a farmers' club has been established, and is doing good work in advancing the best interests of the agricultural and pastoral work of this fertile bush district. During the Premier's visit the annual dinner of the club took place, and as a matter of course, the Premier and his party were invited to attend. The members of the club are mixed in their politics, but it appears all political feelings were put on one side at the function, and Government supporters and Opposition alike gave their guests a true colonial reception. In his address the Premier gave the settlers sound advice respecting their future course of action, and virtually told them not to rely on Providence or Government, but to trust to themselves. A little of the prohibition element was introduced at the meeting, as we understand the president of the club and some of his colleagues had resolved that all the toasts at the after gathering were to be proposed in cold water. Wiser counsels, however, prevailed, and as a result there was a fair supply of the "universal happier" available at the function. The member of the district, Mr A. W. Hogg, in proposing one of the toasts, showed his true manliness when he said, "Charge your glasses; I charge mine in beer, which I have been drinking all the evening." This manly statement was loudly applauded by the party of freedom, but caused a dark visage to appear on those who apparently have no belief in the "freewill agency

of man." The member for Masterton was at one time supposed to be hovering on the defined precipice which divides liberty and fanaticism, but if ever he sat on the edge he has to all appearance made a plunge, and has successfully landed on the firm ground of freedom.

Taken altogether, the Premier's visit to Wairarapa has been a success, and the settlers are satisfied that country as well as town is engaging the practical attention of his Government.

TRADE TOPICS.

Messrs Dwan Bros., hotel brokers, Willis St., Wellington, report the following sales:—Mount Egan Hotel, Midhurst, to Mr J. G. Colville, late of Carterton; Bunnythorpe Hotel, Bunnythorpe, to Mr Symon Glogoskie; Tenui Hotel, Tenui, to Mr L. D. Thompson, late of the Empire Hotel, Masterton; Taueru Hotel, Taueru, to Mr K. McIntosh; Makakahi Hotel, Makakahi, to Captain North, late of the s.s. Waihi; Marine Parade Hotel, Whakataki, to Messrs Parsons and Williamson, late of the Wairarapa; Grand National Hotel, Petone, to Mr W. Biggs, contractor, Wellington; Pahautanui Hotel, Pahautanui, to Mr R. Saunders, late of Rangitikei; and the Royal Hotel, Thorndon Quay, Wellington, to Mr E. J. Searl, well-known in the Wairarapa.

The old White Hart Hotel, corner of Spring and Bourke-streets, Melbourne, was the scene of a little *contretemps* one Saturday night, or early Sunday morning last month. It appears that Constable Hallet, on special Sunday trading duty, in plain clothes, knocked at the door, which was opened by a barman, who would not allow the constable to enter, as his orders from the landlord were to allow no strangers in. At the same time the barman slammed the door, and jammed a link on the constables watch chain. This constituted an assault in the eyes of the law, and the barman was brought before the District Court and fined £6, the bench regretting they could not inflict imprisonment. So much for doing your duty to your employer—a little more, and probably this barman would have been hanged, drawn, and quartered.

The Municipal Association of Victoria is taking steps to get what it calls a more equitable distribution of license fees amongst the municipalities. The Treasurer also contemplates taking £10,000 from the licensing fund to make provision for the aged destitute. This fund is formed from the fees, and is solely intended to be used as compensation to publicans and others for the closing of their houses through a local option vote. The fund now stands at £60,000. The Trade will not object in the least to thus providing for the aged poor, but should not the teetotal bodies also contribute in the same direction?

Near Gundagai, in N.S.W., there is a company working to develop a mineral field. A considerable number of men are employed, and to stop sly-grog selling a "Workingmen's Club" has been formed. One of the miners conceived the idea of buying the drink wholesale by pooling their cash and retailing to each other at first cost. The plan caught on. A Hessian tent was erected; the lounges are kerosene cases, and pannikins take the place of tumblers and wine glasses. The entrance fee to the club is £1, and, though socialistic in its idea, it has degenerated into a species of capitalism. Every night the place is crowded with drinkers, and now the manager of the company is trying to have it suppressed. He says it is doing more harm than would sly-grog shanties. A licensed house, he says, would be a boon. In such a place prohibition is a hypocritical farce, and no better plan exists than the licensing of a hotel according to law. Even the club system fails.

The South Australian Customs receipts for the nine months ending on 31st March last show a decrease of £32,000. In contrast to this, the beer tax gives a heavy increase. What on earth would civilised Government do for revenue were it not for the liquor trade? Great Britain maintains her vast navy and expensive army entirely from that revenue. The people who drink—alcohol, that is—pay for our ironclads and our bayonets, for our bluejackets and our red coats. They keep guard and extend the empire. What does the teetotaler do in that direction, who boasts that alcoholic liquors never pass his lips?

A vote will shortly be taken in Mildura, the Victorian prohibition settlement, to decide whether or not the district should come under the Licensing Act. If so, it is proposed to establish hotels on the Gothenburg system. This means that the municipality will "run" the hotels, and take the profits.

A witness before the Police Commission was asked the question, "Are you a prohibitionist?" His reply should be a motto for the teetotalers, for he answered, "No, I am a total abstainer, but I am also a man."

A blatant lecturer on the evils of drink, a man who oscillates between too much and too little, was seen lately in a leading hotel drinking one of the much-advertised tonics, many a time and oft. At the time a huge bundle of MSS for a teetotal lecture bulged out his breast pocket. Considering that some of these tonics are stronger far than Colonial or British beer, what is to be said of the consistency of such a man? Like most of the prophets of cold water, he and many others of the fraternity bow a frequent knee to Baal.

Sometimes justice is not altogether blind when licensed victuallers are concerned (states the Melbourne *Sportsman*). On a Sunday early last month the police entered the Colac Hotel and found a man there with a glass of shandygaff in his hand. The licensee told the constables that the man had represented himself as a *bona fide* traveller, and, in compliance with the Act, she served him with a drink. This statement the alleged traveller repeated to the police. The latter soon found that the man, though a newcomer to the district, actually resided next door to the hotel. Then, instead of charging the licensee with Sunday trading, the man was proceeded against for representing himself to be a *bona fide* traveller. The case came before the

local police court recently, and has been adjourned until May 13th in order to get a necessary witness.

At the Magistrate's Court, Coromandel, on Thursday last, three charges were laid against a storekeeper named Vetter, of sly grog selling at Opitonui. The case was surrounded with a considerable degree of interest, owing to the fact that an unfortunate man McDevitt had, according to the evidence given at the inquest, partaken of several glasses of whisky on Vetter's premises on the night of his last being seen alive, his body having been picked up several days afterwards in the adjacent Opitonui River. A large amount of evidence was taken. Vetter acknowledged to having dispensed the liquor, the line of defence taken up by Mr McGregor, his solicitor, being that, having opened a general store a few days previously, he was merely entertaining his friends. Vetter, however, admitted that one of the men present on that occasion had paid 2s. This, he supposed, the man had done so as not to appear to be "sponging." The magistrate fined defendant £10, and costs amounting to £3 14s, or in default 14 days' imprisonment. Defendant's solicitor asked for a month's grace. Mr Bush would grant no grace whatever. He had on a previous occasion fined a man £5 for an offence, and had given time, but that defendant had not yet turned up. He did not intend to be had a second time. The money was paid into Court at a later stage.

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