

PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF THE QUEENSLAND LIQUOR LAWS.

In the Legislative Council of Queensland, Mr O'Sullivan has introduced a bill to amend the laws relating to the sale of intoxicating liquor by making better provision for the registration and control of clubs. The bill was read a first time.

The real object of the measure is the suppression of mushroom clubs, which are held to be really nothing more than drinking saloons. By obtaining registration as clubs under the present law they have managed to get the privileges which clubs have of selling liquor without any restriction as to hours, and with only a nominal license fee. Abuses have arisen in two ways—by indiscriminate drinking, and by unfair competition with licensed victuallers. The present bill seeks to enforce registration of clubs under such conditions that only bona fide clubs can carry on. The bill will seek to require registration of the club by the licensing authority. Section 6 prescribes the conditions under which clubs must be, and continue in order to be, registered. The club must be a bona fide association of not less than fifty members, and the annual subscription must not be less than £1, payable in advance. A register of the members for the time being must be kept on the club premises. The bill provides that the rules must make provision for the conduct of the business and affairs of the club, the election of the governing body, and the conditions under which liquor can be supplied on the club premises to persons other than members of the club. The duties of the secretary of the club are strictly defined. Provision is also made for objections to the grant or renewal of the certificate of registration on various grounds, set out in clause 13; and if any of these grounds of objection come into existence during the currency of the certificate, application may be made to the licensing authorities to cancel the certificate, which the licensing authorities have power to do. Provision is also made for the inspection by an inspector of the club premises and the register of members, and a report is to be furnished by the inspector on these subjects to the licensing authority. Stringent provisions are inserted for any breach of the requirements of the Act by the secretary or other persons, or for the sale of liquor under conditions contravening the Act, and penalties are attached for all offences.

THE AUSTRALIAN WINE TRADE.

Messrs P. B. Burgoyne and Co. write:—"The 1904 vintage will be long remembered, both as regards quality and quantity. After a series of dry seasons, the wet winter produced unusually fine growth on the vines, and the returns are in every way very satisfactory. The grapes set well, and ripened evenly. Just before the commencement of the vintage, a heavy fall of rain made the growers somewhat uneasy, a wet vintage seeming probable. The contrary, however, was the case, as there were nearly eight weeks of unbroken fine weather, hot sunny days and cool nights. The wines generally are much above the average in quality, as can well be understood with the grapes free from all fungoid diseases. The sweet wines generally show a marked improvement on former years, whilst the export wines have even greater promise, and we have refrained from reporting on the vintage until after first racking, so as to better judge the quality of the young wines. Realising the requirements of the British market, the growers aimed at a very high standard, and in most cellars they have successfully produced a full-bodied, fruity Burgundy, for which Australia is world-famed. The wines produced from the vineyards situated on hill slopes are excellent, and they stand in a class by themselves—big, round, robust wines of fine colour, with fruitiness of distinct character. The Australian vignerons have made rapid strides in bringing their wine-making plant up-to-date by the importation of the very latest machinery and general appliances for the most cleanly method of handling the grapes. These improved methods of manufacture, together with the exceptionally good season, will mark the 1904 vintage as the finest quality wines ever produced in Australia."

Scarcely had the Royal Assent been given to the English Licensing Bill ere the Temperance leaders in the Congregational churches were to the fore with a manifesto against the measure, showing that the agitation which has been fought tooth and nail by the Trade is to be kept alive during the autumn, no doubt in view of a possible general election early in the new year. Every taint which can be imagined as belonging to an Act of Parliament is said to be inherent in the one which is to come into force in January next. It is denied that the new Act is in any true sense the Act of the

people. "Not only has there been no mandate in its favour, but, on the contrary, an unparalleled series of electoral condemnations at the poll box" say the worthies who sign this precious document, who also contend that "the Bill would have been lost but for the votes of members directly interested in the liquor traffic." There is much more in the manifesto, which winds up with the statement "that the promise of the future is with us." Should a change of Government come about at the next election (remarks the London organ of the Trade) it is quite on the cards that an attempt will be made to undo much of the licensing legislation of the present Parliament, and it behoves the Trade to be ready for any emergency.

Queer and contradictory magisterial decisions on matters affecting the licensees of hotels are not confined to Auckland, as the following from an English Trade paper will show:—"That was rather an extraordinary decision which was given by the magistrates at the Newcastle County Police Court in the case of Mary Whittingham, the licensee of the Bridge Inn, Madeley, who was charged with selling drink to a drunken person, and with permitting drunkenness. It appears that at mid-day two navvies were seen by persons in a neighbouring inn to emerge in a drunken condition, that they then went into an adjoining field and drank three or four more lots of beer, which one of the men fetched from the Bridge Inn, and that later in the day the police found them in a drunken condition. This was the case as outlined by counsel for the prosecution, although the police were informed that all that the men had been supplied with at the house were two pints of ale in two bottles and a bottle of stout. It was sought to make out that the prosecution was the result of Trade jealousy, the Bridge Inn being the only free house in the village. Mrs Whittingham, who is a lady of seventy-four years of age, and an invalid, is the owner, and the house has been held by the family for virtually half a century. Since the death of her husband in 1898 she has carried on the business, and there has hitherto been no complaint against her. The Bench convicted the defendant of selling drink to a drunken person, and fined her 40s, and £3 6s 6d costs, and dismissed the charge of permitting drunkenness. The Bench also dismissed the charge against the navvies for being drunk on licensed premises. It was argued by

counsel for the defence—who contended that there was no evidence of the drunken condition of the men until they were out of the house—that if a man, though he had had drink, was not drunk, purchased liquor in bottles, and it was consumed in a field by some person who became drunk, there could not be a conviction against a licensee for selling drink to a drunken person, or for permitting drunkenness; and this logic seems to be irresistible. The conviction of the licensee and the dismissal of the charge against the navvies has been much discussed locally, and a Trade correspondent who writes to us on the subject rightly describes the decision as 'absurd.'

Mr C. A. Smith, president of the Bath Road Cycling Club, and mine host of the White Lion Hotel, Cobham, one of the most popular hosteleries on the Portsmouth Road, has been having an interview with a burglar, in which the latter came off second best. Shortly after retiring for the night Mr Smith heard sounds of someone moving in his bedroom, and springing out of bed with a very prompt "Who's there?" quickly obtained a hold of the intruder, who was minus his boots, but plus the cash-box, containing a considerable sum in gold and notes. After having dispossessed the burglar of his booty, the muscular president of the Bath Road Club asked his visitor whether he would prefer to be handed over to the police or dealt with by corporal punishment. The thief chose the former, evidently gauging his captor's athletic frame, but Mr Smith decided that corporal punishment would be the most effective way of dealing with his visitor, whom he recognised. The hotel-keeper then took his captive to another part of his bedroom, where a number of sticks were kept. Mr Smith then laid him across his knee, and with the aid of a ground ash stick instilled the principle of "honesty being the best policy" with considerable vigour, only desisting when the stick broke. After that the burglar was allowed to depart, a sadder and wiser man, Mr Smith facilitating the thief's departure from the front door with his foot, and throwing after the burglar his boots, which he had left behind him in the bedroom.

Some of the stories regarding the late Dean Hole are amusing, but speak well for his largeness of heart. Hearing a temperance orator declare that when a

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