



THE CHRISTMAS SEASON.

ONCE again that time of the year that is most particularly given over to enjoyment has come round, and once more we are happily enabled to say that we meet it in prosperous times. The "slump" that has been predicted regularly year after year has not yet materialised, and so far as sober judgment may determine bad times are still somewhere in the uncertain future. So far as the Trade is concerned the year has not been, on the whole, a bad one, and the prospects are good. There are indications that prohibitionism has about reached high-water mark. The fanatical spirit has attempted to interfere in several other directions, and the general public, lethargic enough about most things, has begun to suspect that a loss of liberty in one direction may be followed by a similar deprivation in others. The effect, we may conclude, will be highly satisfactory. Until, however, there is a distinct indication that the country is returning to commonsense and just principles in relation to the licensing law there can be no real feeling of security in the Trade, which must continue to suffer in tone and prestige. The Trade, indeed, will be just what the teetotal party makes it. The fanatics cannot suppress the trade in liquor, but they can do a good deal towards keeping honest and high-principled men out of it, by subjecting them to intolerable indignities. However, we fancy that there is a better time coming. In Great Britain and the Commonwealth of Australia there has been a progressive movement on the part of the Trade, and in this country interests are being gradually solidified in a way that promises excellent results. The Trade is the best friend of true temperance, though a perverse generation has failed to see it. But they will doubtless have their eyes opened at some not far distant day. The Trade may, therefore, take courage, and take all the pleasure there is to be extracted from this glad season, for Christmas belongs as much to the licensed victualler as to the long faced black-coated person who thanks God he is not as other men. With the utmost cordiality we wish our numerous readers

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.



Those who are accustomed to travel about in the colony know how frequently the question is asked, "Which is the best hotel to stay at in such and such a place?" There are, especially during the summer months, a great many strangers travelling through the colony, and there has in the past seemingly been no reliable information available as to the best and most comfortable hotels to put up at in the various towns. There have been "Guides" innumerable published, but none have so far quite met the case, being either badly arranged or filled up with extraneous matter of very little interest to the majority of the travelling public. The handy little publication which has just been issued from the press will, therefore, be welcomed by those who purpose travelling. "Where to Go and Where to Stay in New Zealand" is the title of the Guide, and it is full of information, is well illustrated and printed, and we understand it may now be procured at any of the leading booksellers throughout the colony, the price being one shilling.

One of the most popular hotels in Reefton is the Gladstone, of which Mr R. Dunphy is the proprietor. Mr Dunphy is extremely popular with the townspeople, and does a large bar trade, dispensing none but the best liquors, and conducting his hotel on good lines.

Another very popular hotel in Reefton is Roxborough's. Mr J. Roxborough is well known in the South Island—in other towns as well as on the West Coast—and those who purpose visiting Reefton will find things very comfortable at Roxborough's Hotel.

A very comfortable and well-conducted hotel at Greymouth is the Club Hotel, of which Mr W. H. Rooney is the proprietor. The house is close to the wharf, and having a fair number of rooms, is capable of accommodating a good many visitors.

The Golden Eagle Hotel, Greymouth, is an old-established place, and is well known to those who are in the habit of visiting this seaport town, being very handy to the shipping. Mr P. Phelan is the proprietor.

Mr Thos. Fraser is the present proprietor of the Imperial Hotel, Greymouth, and appears to be doing a satisfactory business. The Imperial is in close proximity to the wharf, and visitors to Greymouth will receive every attention should they decide to put up at the Imperial.

Amongst the numerous hotels at Greymouth one of the most centrally situated is the Commercial. Mr J. McCarthy is the popular host, and having had considerable experience in hotel management is consequently in a position to see that the requirements of his patrons are properly attended to.

Mr J. Reilly, formerly of Timaru, now has the Wallingford Hotel, Temuka. This is a most comfortable place to stay at, and being in the centre of the town, visitors to Temuka will find it very convenient on that account.

Though Balclutha is a prohibition town there are still to be found some very well-conducted private hotels. Amongst these one may mention the Railway Hotel, of which Mr J. McCorley is the proprietor. The hotel is close to the railway station, and those who have stayed there have been thoroughly satisfied. Miss McCorley looks well after the requirements of all visitors, and through her obliging manner has become extremely popular amongst the patrons of the hotel.

CAPE LETTER.

(Correspondent "L.V. Gazette.")

There seems to be no end to the troubles of the wine farmer; the devastation wrought by the phylloxera was not only a great blow to his industry but a loss to the country at large. He is now threatened with another disease to his vines, which, though according to the newspaper reports, reads only like a familiar trouble which the sulphurisation of the vines is intended to prevent, must be of a stranger and more dangerous description when experienced viticulturists form a deputation to the Ministry on the matter. Expert opinion has so far not been able to throw any light on the subject, and although it was noticed last year, it has only now assumed formidable dimensions. The disease shows itself by the appearance on the leaves of little spots (as if they were burnt), and the failure of the shoots, and decay at the roots sets in. Whilst only a few vines were attacked last year, in this season a considerable number are entirely lifeless, and 35,000 vines have been affected on one farm alone. At first it was thought to be due to damp

ground, but later investigation showed that drier spots were just as bad, and sometimes worse. The farmers are in a state of alarm, for if the disease is incurable the wine industry is doomed, and the sole support of many farmers will be gone. Expert opinion is to the effect that it is not the same disease as that which did so much mischief in California in 1890. It appears to affect all varieties of vine, and though most prevalent at Stollenbosch it has also been noticed at the Paarl. The Minister for Agriculture, who, it need scarcely be said, is not an expert, takes the consoling view that the trouble is due to an unseasonable spring; but his practical action is to offer the services of the Government experts, Messrs Dubois and

Lounsbury, to act in concert with a few nominees of the wine farmers. Mr Lounsbury does not think the disease is due to an insect, but to the failure of the roots some time back. Not only the vines but fruit-trees generally are in a bad way, but he did not think there was as yet any great reason for alarm. In conjunction with two of the farmers, the two Government experts are, as soon as possible, to make a tour of the farms, and a thorough inspection in all vine districts.

An interesting little newspaper discussion has taken place lately, a kind of triangular duel, the parties to which are the Minister of Agriculture (Mr Fuller), the temperance party (as represented by Mr Theodore Schreiner), and the wine merchants. The first-named suggested that light Cape wines should be sent up to the Transvaal mines to take the place of Kaffir beer amongst the natives. Mr Schreiner, in a letter to the "Transvaal Leader," alleges (1) There are no mild Cape wines which could be supplied to natives, for the cost of such really light Cape wines as there are, is prohibitive. The Cape wines which are drunk by the coloured people and natives in the Colony are wines badly made and strongly fortified with alcohol, and containing, by permission of the law, up to 42 per cent. of proof (and that generally raw) spirit. These wines are really coarse spirituous liquors, and the permission to manufacture them, without being subject to the Excise, will lead to an increase of drunkenness, and destroy the likelihood of the wine farmer ever taking the trouble to make really light wine. In the second place, says Mr Schreiner, if the natives at the mines are to be supplied with really strong liquor, what is to become of the prohibitive laws outside the mines? Why not outside, too? In which case Johannesburg may as well be as in the old Nellmapius days. In the third place, the permission to supply native beer was really made, not because of its slight alcoholic properties, but because of its antiscorbutic properties. Finally, if the Government encourages the use of wines containing 42 per cent. of proof spirit, what becomes of the laws prohibiting the sale of liquor to aboriginal natives?

Granted Mr Schreiner's facts, his argument is both logical and reasonable; but the wine merchants of the country attack him at the very foundation of his argument. In a letter signed by the principal wholesale merchants it is put forth in answer to the first argument that the highest alcoholic strength of natural Cape wines is from 18 to 25 per cent. of proof spirit, and that these wines could easily be sold at such prices as would be within the reach of native Cape workers. Secondly, that the wine drunk so largely by the coloured people and natives in the Cape Colony contains not more than 23 to 25 per cent. of proof spirit; that is to say, a very slight increase on the natural alcoholic strength of the wine. Further, they state (and here they give themselves bold advertisement) that "badly made" wines are not dealt in by us, such being sold to the distillers or distilled by the farmers themselves. So the discussion ends as might naturally be expected, for the wine merchant and the licensed victualler, standing between producer and consumer, are necessarily the arbiters of the market, and take the best all-round view of Trade matters.

NORTHERN STEAMSHIP COMPANY, LIMITED.

EXCURSION TO NEW PLYMOUTH.
NEW PLYMOUTH RACES, CARNIVAL, AND EXHIBITION OF ART AND INDUSTRIES.
Steamer will leave ONEHUNGA for NEW PLYMOUTH, as under:—

S.S. RAWARA—Sunday, 25th December, 4 p.m. Train 2.30.
S.S. RAWARA—Tuesday, 27th December, 4 p.m. Train 3 p.m.
S.S. RAWARA—Thursday, 29th December, 4 p.m. Train 3 p.m.

RETURN FARE, 32/.

Tickets available for one month from date of issue. Passengers may return by any steamer from New Plymouth.

NORTHERN STEAMSHIP COMPANY, LIMITED.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.

EXCURSION TRIPS

On

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, and TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27 (Weather Permitting).
COWES BAY, WAIHEKE.

P.S. WAKATERE—MONDAY, 26th	9 a.m.
Waitangi and other Steamers if required.	
Last Steamer leaves 9.30 a.m.	
P.S. TERRANORA—TUESDAY, 27th	9 a.m.

RETURN FARE, 2s.

Leaving Waiheke on Return Trip, from 4 to 4.30 p.m.
First-class Luncheon at 1s, provided on shore by Mr H. Insley.

PONUI ISLAND.

P.S. TERRANORA—MONDAY, 26th	9 a.m.
Landing Passengers at New Wharf.	
RETURN FARE, 2s.	
Leaving Ponui Island on Return Trip at 4 p.m.	

WAIWERA, HOT SPRINGS.

S.S. NGAPUHI—MONDAY, 26th	9 a.m.
S.S. CLANSMAN—TUESDAY, 27th	9 a.m.

RETURN FARE, 3s.

Leaving Waiwera on Return Trip at 4 p.m.

KAWAU.

S.S. CLANSMAN—MONDAY, 26th	9.15 a.m.
S.S. WELLINGTON—TUESDAY, 27th	9 a.m.

RETURN FARE, 3s.

Leaving Kawau 4 p.m. on Return Trip.

S.S. WAIOTARI—MONDAY, 26th ... 9 a.m.
S.S. CLANSMAN—TUESDAY, 27th ... 9 a.m.

RETURN FARE, 3s.

Leaving Mahurangi Heads on Return Trip at 4 p.m.

BANDS WILL BE IN ATTENDANCE.

Children under twelve years, half-price.
Cold Luncheon, 1s, as usual.

THAMES SUMMER RACE MEETING.

P.S. WAKATERE—TUESDAY, 27th	7 a.m.
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RETURN FARE, 7s 6d.

Leaving Thames on Return Trip at 9 p.m.

EIGHT DAYS' PLEASURE CRUISE.

FEBRUARY 17 TO 25.

HOW TO SPEND A PLEASANT HOLIDAY.

The Fine Passenger Steamer NGAPUHI will be despatched on FRIDAY, February 17, for her Second Annual Pleasure Trip along the Northern Coast.

Send to the Northern Company's Office for descriptive leaflet showing the proposed itinerary.

All the most beautiful and interesting places will be visited under conditions which will promote the comfort and enjoyment of passengers.

Two days will be spent in Whangaroa, the most picturesque harbour in New Zealand.

Launches will be provided at all the ports of call.
Excellent fishing all along the coast.
FARES: From £7 to £10.
Excursions limited to 50 to secure general comfort.

At the annual dinner and ball of the Westminster and Chelsea Trade Association, on October 27, the chairman, Mr P. G. Gates, director of the New Westminster Brewery Company, in proposing the toast of the evening, met with a hearty reception. Dilating at the outset upon the importance of the Trade, he reminded the company that it was the Trade societies which first called the attention of the Government to the injustice which had been perpetrated upon this enormous and valuable Trade, and which led to the introduction and passing of the Licensing Act providing that compensation should be given to those licensees who were dispossessed of their licenses through no