



THE NEW YEAR.

A COMPREHENSIVE review of the year just closed would make interesting reading. So many events big with the fate of empires and continents have happened, so many things have passed away and so many have had their beginning. In the Far East, or the Far North, as it is to us, the question of the future destiny of a whole quarter of the globe is being slowly and painfully determined in terms of blood while in other divisions of the earth's surface like problems have been or are in process of settlement under the benign auspices of peace.

But these are subjects that have induced voluminous comments and explication in columns other than these, which it is our necessary practice to confine more or less closely to the discussion of matters affecting the commercial interests of one important Trade. But for this Trade the year 1904 has been sufficiently eventful. It has been marked by increased activity in those organisations, which for a variety of assumed reasons are actively opposed to what is called the "liquor traffic," but which it would be more honest and more correct to call the freedom of mankind to drink what it likes—a freedom that should be tempered solely by provisions against excess.

All over the world the miscalled "temperance advocate" persists in identifying liquor with drunkenness, though no one outside of a lunatic asylum would identify food with gluttony, or sleep with sloth, or bathing with indecency, though every habit when followed to the extreme or perverted becomes criminal just as is the case with sottishness. The prohibitionist professes to believe that the only cure for inebriety is the closure of the public house, and unfortunately the majority of men and women have been content to accept this extraordinary creed, have thus—not quite consciously it is right to say—added naturally in the insane Campaign against a reputable trade.

But during the year, as a counterpoise to the activity in the ranks of the enemy there has sprung up a new and determined spirit of unity in the Trade that is already producing good results. In England, Australia, South Africa and Canada there is now a pretty evident movement in advance on the part of those whose means of livelihood has been threatened, while in this country it has to be admitted that the legislation of the past session has actually, if not very substantially improved the status of the Trade. While, on the one hand a great injustice has been done by the abolition of the bona fide traveller, recent magisterial decisions, based as we are bound to assume upon an intelligent reading of the new Act demonstrate that the licensed victualler is no longer to be treated as a pariah and the butt of the police. And this apart from the provision that gives the stipendiaries discretion in the matter of endorsements. The disposition of the bench now is more and more to treat the hotel as though it were the private residence of the landlord as well as a

public place for the sale of liquor under certain restrictions. It is an important point gained to have so much admitted, and it will lead to something of greater importance by-and-by.

In England and Victoria the principle of compensation is on its trial, and before another year has passed we shall have sufficient data upon which to base the righteous demands of the Trade here. This colony boasts of taking the lead in many things, but it is not certain that we have always done so when the main principle involved the application of honesty all round. In other words, much of Liberalism is of the flashy, meretricious order, and very little of that true brand that preaches "equal justice to all sections of the population."

It is never wise to rohes unless you know, but we cannot keep expressing the opinion—more than once given in these columns—that a "slur" in teetotalism is approaching. A movement like this, receiving its impulsion from hysteria and supported by false evidence, endures for any length of time. And prohibition has enjoyed its beginnings now. Directly a considerable proportion of the people were made to feel the effects of the teetotal sumpuary law, rebellion got into the air, and rebellion soon forms into revolution in cases such as this.

To us, then, the next year contains the seeds of a reasonable hope. The country is prosperous and none of the dire consequences predicted of the prohibitionist statisticians have come to pass. The only places that seem to show a falling off in vitality are those in which teetotal majorities have shut up the hotels and handed the other residents over to the mercy of the sly grog sellers. Elsewhere the maintenances of the rats for our staple products and increase in the price of others means progress.

Trade Topics

The Victorian Licensing Act contains a section similar to ours, but it is not often called into operation. It provides that if it is made to appear to justices that any person, by excessive drinking, wastes his estate or greatly injures his health or endangers the peace and happiness of his family, the justices may prohibit all licensees in the district from supplying him with liquor for twelve months. Alfred Krummel, secretary of the Rechabite Lodge at Warragul, recently applied to the local justices for such a prohibition in respect of Albert Kidd, a labourer, who, it was sworn, had been twice convicted of being drunk and disorderly within the last twelve months, and whom the local constable described as so affected by drink as seldom to have a clear mind. An order was made prohibiting all licensees within the shire of Warragul from supplying Kidd with drink.

Kidd resenting this restriction, his counsel, on November 18, obtained from the Chief Justice an order nisi to review the decision. It was said that the complainant was a mere busybody, and that the only person qualified to take proceedings was the licensing inspector, and it was contended that the evidence did not show the facts necessary to found such an order as that made. The Chief Justice: The defendant would probably consider anybody who interfered with his drinks a busybody—(laughter)—and it is difficult to see how the inspector could always have the necessary knowledge, for a man might wear the blue ribbon, or even be the leading life in a temperance band. (Laughter.) However, the law on that point ought to be settled. The Act does not say who is to prosecute, and it might be that the justices could proceed on a view—as if they met the man every morning on their way to court, and were exhorted by him after the manner of his kind. Here it is not shown that he has wasted his estate, for it might be that his drinks were at somebody else's expense. (Laughter.) Nor is it shown that his health or the happiness of his family are disturbed, nor even that he possesses a family.

The provision that no liquor license or club certificate should be granted on any estate disposed of under the Closer Settlement Bill was objected to in the Victorian Legislative Council by Mr Harwood on November 3, who, in moving that the clause be struck out, said: it formed no part of the Government proposals, though the Assembly had agreed to it. The clause had nothing whatever to do with the real object of the bill. The experiment had been tried elsewhere and failed, as there were people who would have their liquor. The Attorney-General considered that the clause would be a blessing. Only the sale, not the consumption of liquor would be prohibited. Mr Melville quoted Mildura as an object lesson of prohibition, but Mr Evans referred him to a statement that £500 had been made out of a transaction in empty liquor bottles at the temperance town. Mr Evans welcomed as the first step towards nationalisation of the liquor traffic the amendment circulated by Mr Ritchie, enabling the board, without any license, at the request of the majority of settlers, to conduct the sale of liquor, and place the profits to the credit of the closer settlement fund. Mr Balfour warmly supported the clause. Portion of the clause prohibited licensed persons outside a settlement delivering liquor to settlers. This, on the amendment of Mr Baillieu, was eliminated, and the Attorney-General declared that a vital part of the clause had been lost. The clause as amended was agreed to. Mr Ritchie announced that he would drop his amendment, but it was moved by Mr Melville. The committee rejected it without discussion.

NEW SOUTH WALES WINES IN JAPAN.

Mr F. Suttor, the commercial agent for New South Wales in the East writes:—"Several cases of New South Wales wines have been sent to my office, and I have done my utmost to distribute to likely consumers. The Oriental Hotel Company, of Kobe, are greatly pleased with New South Wales light wines, such as hock, and it would be well for any of our New

South Wales winegrowers to write to the secretary of the company, with a view to business; give c.i.f. quotations, and send sample case. It is the hotel companies that practically do the business, and it would also be advisable to write the manager of the Imperial Hotel, Tokio. Success can only attend efforts when the exact c.i.f. prices can be given, and, in this respect, other countries make a special effort to secure a footing, and do business. Wines for the Eastern market must be very carefully packed in the usual size cases, and thick straw wrappers. When unloading, the handling is usually very rough, in consequence of vessels unloading out in the stream into lighters. The cases have also to be very strong to withstand the frequent handling. I have already reported on this matter in connection with damaged cases arriving at my office, the most damaged ones being those with ribbed paper wrappers."—(Exchange.)

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN LIQUOR TRADE DEFENCE UNION.

This organisation may now be considered a live institution in this State, and shows promise of good work being done for the benefit of the liquor interests generally. It is a great pity it did not come into existence earlier, as the opponents of their cause have had a long start, and every opportunity with a free hand to establish themselves throughout the length and breadth of the land. The field has been comparatively clear for them since the year 1891, up till when there existed a somewhat similar organisation to the present union, which was established here in 1887 by the wholesale branch of the liquor interests under the title of the "Trade Defence Association." During its lifetime it did good work politically, securing the return of many liberal candidates to both Houses of the Legislature.

The electoral rolls throughout the State were well looked after and revised. Thousands of voters' names were placed on the rolls by the association, which at the time was a political power in the land. South Australia is indebted to it and the Licensed Victuallers' Association, who worked conjointly with them, for the existence of the present Totalisator Act, which certainly would not have become law at the time but for the influence of these two organisations; and although the Legislature of the day was ripe for closing hotels by local option without compensation, the influence of the before-named societies was responsible for obtaining the fifteen years' grace, which will so shortly expire. Unfortunately, some of the leading members of the wholesale trade became apathetic, allowing the association to die for the want of financial support, much to their discredit, which some of them now no doubt recognise and repent. It is to be hoped that they may have learnt a lesson by the past, and that now they have again combined, they will not allow their newly-formed union to fall from a similar cause.—"C.J.," in "A.B. Journal."

INTERESTING LETTER FROM BREWER TO CUSTOMER.

The following is a copy of a letter that has been handed to the "A.B. Journal" for publication. It is dated September

SMOKE
Old Judge
 TOBACCO & CIGARETTES.