

HOME NOTES.

("London L.V. Gazette," May, 1905.)

Not only the Licensed Victuallers' School, but the Licensed Victuallers' Asylum, is taking a new departure this year. It is an experiment on the part of the governing body of the former to hold the annual festival at the Hotel Cecil; it is also an experiment on the part of the chairman and committee of the latter to invite a country brewer to undertake the duties of president for the year. Sir John Brickwood, the popular chairman of the Portsmouth Brewery and chairman of the National Trade Defence Association, who has so willingly come forward to help the asylum in a time of depression and need, fully recognises this, but it may be that the friends of this—the oldest Trade charity in the kingdom—who have so steadfastly stood by it in the past will rally round the new president in larger numbers than ever in order to show their high appreciation of Sir John's philanthropic efforts. At the same time he has warned the committee not to expect from him as much as they would expect from a big London brewer. When Sir Thomas Dewar last year asked the representatives of his firm throughout the kingdom to enlist financial support for the School, they were informed in many cases that it was a London institution from which country licensed victuallers could derive no benefit, and Sir John Brickwood fears much the same reply in regard to his applications for help for the Asylum. However, the new president may depend upon the heartiest support of the Trade in London.

One of the largest public sales of wines and spirits that has ever taken place in London or in the United Kingdom is announced for Wednesday next, May 24, by Messrs. H. R. Colbeck and Co., of Great Tower-street, London. Something like 150,000 bottles of wine, including ports, champagne, clarets, hocks, sauternes, and high-class Saumur, will be offered, in addition to pipes and hogsheads of ports and sherries. The bottled wines will be offered in dozens. The special stock of 5000 dozens of claret includes wines from some of the most famous chateaus, and include Chateau Latour and Chateau Larose 1889. In addition to the wines a large quantity of brandy and whisky—both Scotch and Irish—will be put up for sale, and no fewer than 278 barrels of Californian brandy will be offered. Representatives of the Trade from all parts of the country may be expected to attend the auction, which commences at the London Commercial Sale Rooms at one o'clock.

It cannot be said that Mr. John D. Wallis, in his paper on "The Licensing Act 1904, with Special Reference to the Questions of Compensation and Monopoly Value," read before the Surveyors' Institution on Monday evening, shed much light on the working of the measure, which up to the present had been productive of benefit only to the legal fraternity. His commentaries and explanations were practically the same as those already published by other expert annotators, and it is pretty evident that the darkness still prevailing can only be illumined by having recourse to the courts of law. According to the Act the monopoly value is to be the difference between the value which the premises would bear when licensed and the value of the premises if they were not licensed. To the lay mind this is, of course, as clear as mud. Mr. Wallis said if he might venture upon a definition he would say the monopoly value was to be the value of the license only, whilst the value for compensation was to be the value of the license added to the depreciation of the premises due to the extinction of the license.

In order to illustrate this he took, for example, the case of a public-house with a full license, the premises having cost a few years ago, say, £8000, and valued to-day at £15,000. Here, he said, the value of the license would be £7000, but the compensation for refusal would be not only £7000, but in addition the amount of depreciation of the premises, which, having been specially erected for a particular purpose, would be worth much less than the actual cost if put to some other use, and would probably not be worth more than £2000 without the license. In such a case the amount of compensation for extinction would be £13,000, but if a similar house were built to-day at the same cost the monopoly value would be the sum of £7000, the value of the license only, assuming it to be an annual license. It is difficult to follow this reasoning. Clearly a house built to-day at a cost of £800 would not, after it has been licensed, be worth the same amount as a house of the same value erected, say, ten or twenty years ago, and which is in the enjoyment of a lucrative trade that has been built up by indomitable energy and perseverance on the part of the license-holder.

Next week the Parliament of the Trade meets at Blackpool, and much interest is manifested in its deliberations. Quite a number of subjects of interest to the Trade will be discussed, and important resolutions will be passed, copies of which will be forwarded to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary. Amongst others, the subjects of Sunday closing and the earlier closing of public-houses will receive consideration, and special attention will be given to the question of clubs, which are still on the increase and are now more numerous than ever. Members of the Trade have no desire to interfere with well-organised institutions which are part and parcel of the social life of the community, but it is high time that Parliament made some attempt to put down the unlicensed drinking dens which are now to be found all over the country, and which are proving such a source of unmitigated evil, especially to the rising generation.

Perhaps never before has the Trade been so largely represented at the Law Courts as it has been during the present week. Licensed victuallers have turned up in considerable numbers to listen to the arguments advanced in the various appeal cases against the action of the licensing justices. In the main the question in dispute is practically the same, and the Lord Chief Justice has promised to give judgment on Monday, when the Divisional Court will no doubt be once more crowded by members of the Trade. In the case of Drinkwater and other justices—*ex parte* Wincott—however, a very important point was raised and decided. An application having been made to the justices for the removal of a license they refused to make the order, contending that a new license was necessary and that "a monopoly value" would have to be paid. In this case the Lord Chief Justice held that the justices were clearly wrong, and the rule for a mandamus compelling a rehearing of the case was made absolute. This question of the removal of a license is of the highest importance, and it would have been indeed hard on the license-holder if, for instance, when street improvements are effected he should be called upon to take out a new license, pay a "monopoly value," and lose his compensation under the Act.

What splendid work the League has done for the Trade during the past year is conclusively shown by the annual report which will be submitted to the delegates, and the Council may well be gratified with the result of its operations. In the number of affiliated associations the strength of the organisation has been fully maintained, at the same time it is regrettable that so many associations should remain unaffiliated. The fact that the new Licensing Act providing compensation for the dispossessed license-holder is now in operation should not lull the Trade into a sense of false security. Never perhaps were the services of the League more needed than they are to-day, when the licensing interest is seriously threatened by the Opposition, and the time is evidently not far distant when license-holders will have to make their voice heard once more for their own protection and in defence of the Trade. There have been big fights in the past; a still bigger battle is looming in the near future.

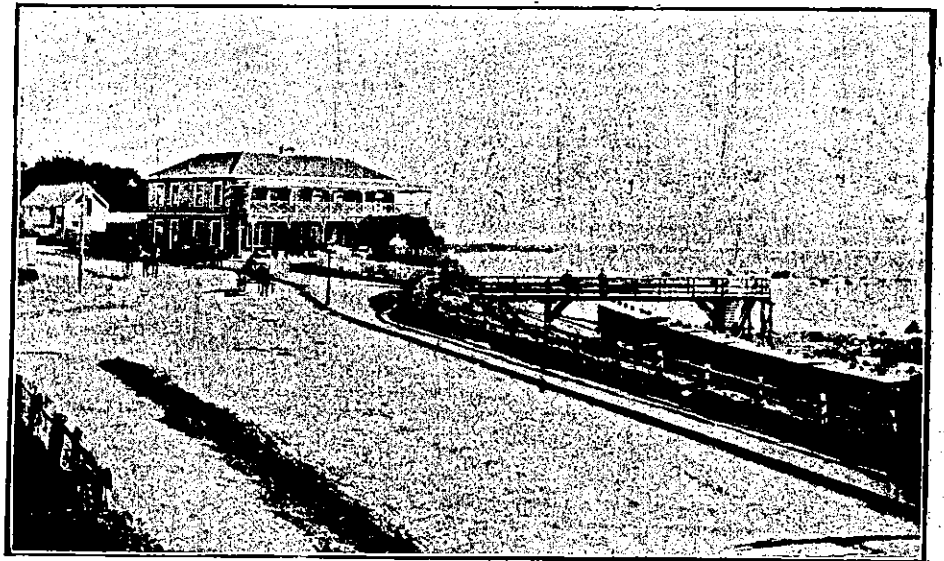
Reference is made in the report to a question of much importance—the direct representation of the Trade upon local public bodies. As one of the primary objects of the League is "to place the Trade in the best possible position to defend its interests when those interests are assailed," it is not surprising to find the Council giving expression to the view that the opportunities afforded for giving practical effect to that object have not been taken advantage of sufficiently to ensure the members of the licensed Trade fair and thoroughly impartial treatment by local bodies or to prevent the imposition of oppressive restrictions upon licensed traders. Every association is advised to take this matter in hand. That it has been too long neglected no one will doubt. County and borough councils, urban councils and boards of guardians all are equally free to the Trade as to the teetotaler, yet how seldom a Trade candidate is nominated. If license-holders and members of the Trade generally would only give a little more attention to municipal affairs they would find their position far easier.

(Established 1868.)

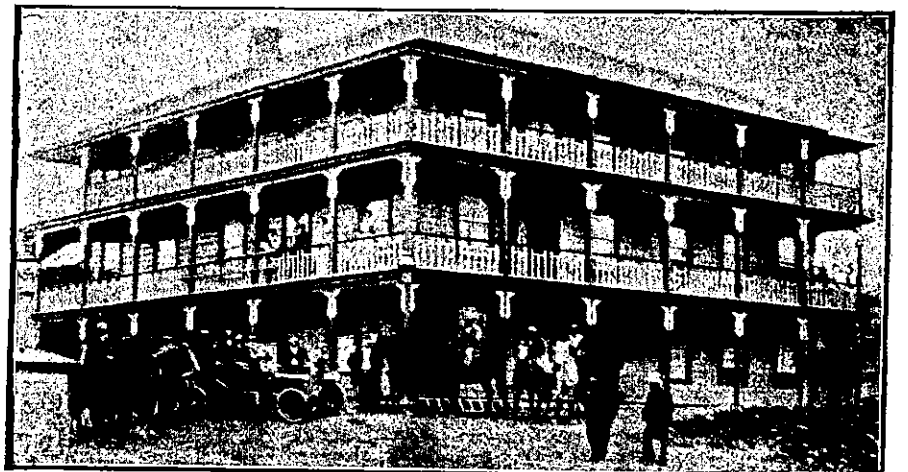
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