



TEETOTAL AGITATORS.

THAT the ways of the professional teetotaler are tortuous and littered with mendacity is an axiom known to all who have condescended to enter into controversy with him. The stock-in-trade of the ordinary prohibitionist agitator appears to consist of a vivid and somewhat prurient imagination, combined with an imperturbable impudence that only the ignorance and mental deficiency of his immediate followers render possible. It is also true (says the Australian "Brewers' Journal") that the fanatic, be he teetotaler or any other extremist, is eternally jumping at conclusions conjured up in his small, overwrought brain, and his action founded thereon becomes the more unscrupulous and unreasonable in exact proportion to his educational status. Your supposed-to-be-cultured agitator thus becomes more dangerous than the ordinary rauter.

The number of untruths uttered since the inception of the prohibitionist agitation are uncountable, and point distinctly to the fact that the zealots are callous to a degree as to the means they use to attain their ends. Thorne, in his "Heresies of Teetotalism," tells of "a brother from New York State who entertained us with the account of an incendiary society organised in that State to burn down distilleries and other buildings." And Mr. Thorne further on says that what struck him most was, that those present (all teetotalers) took no exception to the code of morality implied in the statement. It is therefore probable that to members of the Victorian Alliance the utterance of a "rousing whid" is, as confessed by the president, "not such a terrible thing."

In Melbourne recently a certain dry-throated beauty from New Zealand gave vent to the following remarks about the trade:—"We have given the liquor traffic every opportunity to make itself respectable. We have given certain persons only the right to trade, and have hedged it round with restrictions. In spite of all, it is bad, it is lawless, it is filthy. Then it comes along to us and it pleads it should not be hurt." A pretty good sample of blackguardism that, and yet the creatures who make such statements are blindly followed by a certain section of the community who hang on their every word as gospel.

At the Palmerston North S.M. Court recently, a man was sentenced to two months' imprisonment with hard labour for throwing a glass full of beer at a barman at the Central Hotel. The assault appears to have been quite unprovoked, and the barman was badly cut about the head with the shattered glass.

Liquor and license were burning questions in Wellington even in 1858, remarks the "Post." Two petitions appear in the proceedings of the sixth session of the Provincial Council, held in that year. In those days, it appears, anyone could sell up to two gallons of alcoholic liquors without a license; and twenty-three licensed victuallers petitioned in protest. The other petition came from ninety-six people of different views with the names of James Buller (Wesleyan minister) and Joshua Smith (Primitive Methodist minister) in the forefront. They called attention to "the alarming amount of intemperance prevalent in this town," and asked that no more licenses be granted, "and for the more effectually closing public-houses on the Sabbath." The petitioners assert "that there is in this town alone, which, according to the census taken a few months ago, contains 2012 persons above the age of 15 years, 22 houses for the sale of intoxicating liquor, and three more in the immediate neighbourhood."

The great resort in Wellington for members of the profession is the new "Zealandia Private Hotel," Cambridge Terrace, corner of Courteney Place, where many members of the company now performing at the Theatre Royal are now staying. The house is up-to-date in every way, and trams for all quarters start from the corner close to front entrance. The centre of the town can be reached on foot comfortably under ten minutes. Mrs. Bushett, the lessee, is an ideal hostess, who understands the happy combination of hotel and private life.

Mrs. Berghan's hotel, Mangonui, was the scene of a meeting last week of a large number of residents interested in the reorganising of the local cricket club. A special vote of thanks was passed during the evening to Mrs. Berghan, who has generously handed over a piece of ground on her property for the laying down of a concrete pitch.

At the Federal Hall, Wellesley-street, on Saturday evening, a large audience assembled to hear Mr. J. Dixon Ward's anti-prohibition address. Mr. Ward first dealt with the Scriptural side of the question, and then went on to point out how dismally the efforts of prohibitionists had failed in the various American States that had been misled by their statements. Life insurance societies frequently made a difference, and had a temperance section and a general section. The New Zealand Government Life Insurance Department adopted that system for a number of years, and in the returns the sections were divided up till 1896. He was informed that, until 1896, when the sections were amalgamated, no policy-holder in the temperance section ever received a bonus, while the others did. It was absolute fact that the mortality tables proved, beyond the shadow of doubt, that the general section was the longer lived. The average life in the temperance section was 41.7 years, and in the other section 49.4 years. (Applause.) This principle was not confined to New Zealand, for the British Medical Journal published particulars of an exhaustive inquiry, and proved that moderate users of alcohol lived longest. The figures published in the London "Daily Telegraph" showed the average ages as: Moderate drinkers, 63 years 13 days, and total abstainers, 51 years 21 days. Thus, by compelling abstinence the prohibitionists not only robbed men of their privileges, but also of portion of their lives. (Laughter and applause.) Referring to the often-repeated opinion (of the injurious effects of alcohol) given by Sir Frederick Treves, the lecturer said Sir F. Treves was, after all, a surgeon, and not a physician, and went on to point to many eminent physicians, such as Dr. Thomas Dutton, Sir Dyce Duckworth, Sir James Paget, and Dr. A. Wilson, in contradiction of Sir F. Treves' opinion. The opinions of the best thinkers of the world and the whole evidence was against the principle of local option.

Mr. Ward then dealt with the alleged prosperity of Ashburton, and pointed out how distorted the statements made by the prohibitionists were. He instanced Hamilton as a town which was going ahead faster than Ashburton, to show that the progression of Ashburton was not due to prohibition. Not one shilling of the prosperity of Ashburton was due to no-license, for no-license had decreased the hotel values by £9000 a year, so that over £18,000 worth of property had been confiscated in Ashburton. If they decreased, by law, the rental value of a man's property, they confiscated portion of his capital, so that £18,000 worth of property in Ashburton had actually been confiscated. By doing this the prohibitionists were committing a breach of the commandment which said, "Thou shalt not steal." If it was wrong for an individual to steal, it was wrong for a majority to steal the property of a minority. (Applause.) The modern rendering of the commandment, according to the prohibitionists, was: "Thou shalt not steal, except from a brewer or publican." Sir John Logan Campbell had donated a-quarter of a million worth of property to the people of this city. (Loud applause.) (A voice: Got it out of beer, and laughter.) No, he did not get it out of beer, but out of general merchandise, long ago. This great gift, said the lecturer, had been given by Sir J. Logan Campbell to the people of Auckland for all time, and the donor kept for himself only his shares in a business, which happened to be a brewery. Now the prohibitionist proposed to confiscate what little Sir John had left. (Applause.) Thou shalt not steal, said the prohibitionist, except from a brewer or publican. (Loud applause.) The Government of New Zealand had imported, at great expense, an expert to build up the wine industry, which the prohibitionists would destroy.

That industry would settle the very best class of citizens on the land, and result in the very high and profitable cultivation of the country for vinegrowing, and it would, or should, take its place amongst the most important of New Zealand industries. The German indemnity of 200 millions was paid by the small French vinegrowers in a few weeks. (Applause.) He also spoke of danger that would be caused by prohibition, through driving tourist traffic from the colony. In conclusion, he called upon the people, in the name of their hope for prosperity and success in the future, to vote against the unrighteous law of prohibition, and to see that, election after election, a smaller vote was cast for no-license, until the provision was wiped off the Statute Book. (Applause.) After having answered several questions, the lecturer was accorded a vote of thanks for his address.

LICENSING AND COMPENSATION.

THE ENGLISH LAW AT WORK.

No temperance experiment in the Empire is being watched with keener interest by reformers than the Balfour Licensing Act passed last year by the Imperial Parliament (says the "Launceston Daily Telegraph.") Though denounced by extreme teetotalers and by many Anglican bishops as a concession to the "Drink Trust," it is generally regarded as a distinct advance on previous legislation. The Act is now in full operation, being administered in England by the bench of justices in each licensing area. Already experience has been gathered which should prove valuable to Australian reformers and legislators. Under the Balfour Act the justices, as the compensation authority, have to collect and administer a fund obtained by a levy on every tenant or licensee of a licensed house, based on a sliding scale, which has been summarised by a correspondent of "The Manchester Guardian" as follows:—

- Under £15 annual value, levy £1 a year.
- Under £50 annual value, levy £10 a year.
- Under £100 annual value, levy £15 a year.
- Under £500 annual value, levy £50 a year.
- Over £500 annual value, levy £100 a year.

In the case of brewery companies controlling a number of houses, the levy has worked out to about 2 per cent. on share capital. The money is distributed amongst houses selected by the justices for closure in accordance with a somewhat involved plan. Each year a certain number of houses is selected for closure by a committee of the bench of justices. The list is made known, and the license-holders affected appear personally or by representative, and debate it with the whole of the justices in open court. Sometimes further consideration is necessary at another meeting. Finally, the justices decide the conclusive composition of the closure list, and refuse renewal of the licenses affected. They thus reach the compensation stage of the proceedings, when two sets of valuations come before them—one prepared by their own valuers, and the other by the claimants for compensation. In the city of Bristol, where the year's work under the Act is complete, eleven houses were scheduled for closure. The licensees claimed £11,500; the official valuer estimated compensation at £6165—a difference of £5335, or 46 per cent. There was a dispute, and the Commissioners of Inland Revenue have been asked to adjudicate. In Warrington £3000 was claimed for one house in a leading thoroughfare—monopoly value. The corporation owned the site. The compensation granted was £2210, out of which the tenant received only £70. In Bolton three official valuers were necessary. The claims have not all been settled at time of writing. They include a number of small houses and two big ones, both belonging to the municipality; the rent of each alone is £200 a year. Only one case is on record as yet in which the claimant's and justices' estimates of compensation were identical. In Manchester, in a large number of cases, the claimants accepted the justices' compen-

sation proposals. In this great midland centre two-fifths of the houses to be closed belonged to private persons, the remainder being owned by brewers.

The principles guiding valuation for compensation purposes may be illustrated by a couple of examples taken from Manchester's experience. The value of property adjacent to or in close proximity to the public house or hotel to be closed is used as being of assistance in assessing its value after the license is withdrawn:

- (a) A beer house and adjoining dwelling houses fronting a main Manchester tramway. The market value of the former was 24½ years' purchase of the rent, equivalent to a return of 4.1 per cent., whilst the market value of the adjacent houses was 8½ years' purchase equal to 11.7 per cent.; the difference is the monopoly value, which in this case is larger than the average. In both cases deductions from the rentals would have to be made, which are too technical to be quoted here, and which would, to some extent, but not materially, modify the figures. In many cases the difference is much less; in others it is greater.
- (b) A public-house, fully licensed, in a side street; rent £45, without chief rent. In this case the market value was only sixteen years' purchase of the rental, equivalent to a yield of 6.2 per cent. Adjoining small weekly houses, the type of the district, were of ten years' purchase market value, but from the latter chief rent, rates, and so on have to be deducted.

Until the end of 1905, when the official statistics for the whole of England will be available, it is not possible to estimate what the gradual method of extinguishing licenses under the Balfour Act will cost "the trade" annually. The foregoing will be sufficient to show that the Act is being worked on business lines. The "trade," which in a measure benefits by the reduction in the number of licensed houses, has to pay the compensation to those of its members who are dispossessed by what, with all its defects, is on the whole an impartial tribunal. The lower valuations of premises once licensed as public-houses will affect the rates slightly, but otherwise the public purse will not suffer.

A LOST ART.

(By G. R. Barnett-Smith in "The Wine Trade Review.")

Looking at the pictures of our forefathers seated round the festive board it is easy to conjure up the discussion which took place at the different banquets over this or that particular glass of wine.

One has only to notice the almost fatherly care with which the butler handles the decanter to feel assured that he takes an intelligent interest in the wines which he has charge, and is proud of the fact that they are appreciated.

Turn again to those old canvases of the jolly monks. Notice the smile of satisfaction on the face of one of the monks, on whom has devolved the not unpleasant task of looking after the cellar, as he holds a glass of wine to the light of a candle in the corner of the cobwebbed vault. The fine, brilliant condition of the wine is already enough to gladden the heart of the true connoisseur before lingering over the exquisite aroma and finally the delicate flavour. Such indeed is a pleasure to one who has the palate, the inclination, and knowledge to discriminate.

Anyone can swallow a glass of liquid such a process requires no education, no special knowledge. But these are essentially necessary in order to properly appreciate one of the finest products of Nature, and to thoroughly enjoy the wines of different countries. The present-day host, with few exceptions, knows little about his cellar, and cares less. In many cases it is too much trouble to see that the claret or Burgundy is in good condition. If the wine should be sold as is most likely to be the case in the winter, the order is given to put the bottle for a few minutes in some hot water "to take the chill off." Such a sudden change in temperature is enough to upset the internal mechanism of a bottle of gingerbeer, let alone the delicate nature of a fine claret or Burgundy.