



THE LATE PREMIER.

That New Zealand has suffered a great loss by the death of Richard John Seddon is universally admitted. The world-wide expression of sympathy accompanied by such genuine tributes to the noble qualities of our late Premier are re-echoed in the breasts of all clear, clean-minded individuals. Only those who allow bitter fanaticism to warp the charitable thoughts which we are all taught to hold of the dead have anything but kindly praise for the memory of one of the greatest men that New Zealand has ever seen. For some time it will appear strange to have to disassociate New Zealand's politics from Mr. Seddon's striking personality, dominating influence, and unparalleled perseverance. And it is a safe prediction that many of his measures which have been passed, for the benefit of the people he practically gave his life for, will stand as living and active memories of his Premiership long, long after his detractors have passed into that oblivion from which they have sprung. The tragically sudden end, coming with such painful unexpectedness, is softened by the thought that the man was called upon by a Higher Power to relinquish his labours at an hour when he had achieved his highest political power. Unfortunately for the Trade, the local option movement has completely overshadowed all other matters of political interest, and the necessities of life cause, even though unwillingly, much speculation as to the probable tendency of any future political measures in regard to the Trade. It is interesting to note that it was during Mr. Seddon's first session as Premier that the great movement of referring the governing of the liquor trade to the people became law. The local option poll at this time was first put to the people, and the Act providing for license or no-license was passed. As it was originally introduced and passed, little or no amendment has been effected, the main issues—license, reduction or no-license—remaining the same. Whatever amendments have been made have only been in minor matters, and we must not forget that Mr. Seddon strenuously resisted many attempts that were made from time to time to alter the main points, and to introduce legislature calculated to be more galling to the Trade than the present Act. Eliminating all political points, no man can but help feeling admiration for the man, and profound sympathy for his widow and family, who without warning have been suddenly plunged into mourning.

THE SLY GROG CASES.

The revelations in connection with the sly grog cases, which were heard in our local Court last week, form a striking illustration of what our town would be like under no-license. Although we live in a fully-licensed district, with every facility for buying liquor in a respectable manner during six days of the week, we find that on the seventh day a huge sly grog business is being carried on, and that under the most disreputable circumstances, and under the very noses of our authorities. Little imagination is needed to imagine that under no-licenses these sly grog dens would increase a thousandfold, and the nefarious traffic carried on every day of the week. The astounding part of the whole disclosure is that the business seems to be carried on in a thoroughly systematic and established manner. There is no haphazard sales about it. Apparently these shops have their regular customers, who enter and demand their liquor with an effrontery which can only have been gained by a long period of usage. It may be instructive to our wise men

on the Licensing Bench that there was no evidence forthcoming to show that barmaids or maids of any kind were employed to induce the youth of Auckland to drop in on a Sunday morning. Naturally the suggestion comes that there is doubtless a good deal more of this sort of business being carried on, not only on Sundays but on week days, the number of prohibited persons who apparently easily obtain liquor bearing this suggestion out. No doubt there is also a big business done at night after the hotels are closed, and it is to be sincerely hoped that the police will soon unearth some more of these evil-doers. The fines, though fairly substantial, are hardly sufficient deterrent punishment; in fact, in comparison to the punishment of fines and endorsements sometimes inflicted upon hotelkeepers they are absurdly low. However, the Trade generally are delighted that some at least of the sources of Sunday supply have come to light. The eyes of the general public will now be open to the fact that the cases of drunkenness on Sunday which have been painfully frequent are not attributable to the misdoing of hotelkeepers, and that the blame which has hitherto been showered on the latter has been totally undeserved. The whole disclosures will no doubt cause serious thought to those who are inclined to be led away by the cry of no-license. The latter condition in Auckland could only result in sly grog-selling being conducted to such an extent that the authorities would be unable to cope with it.

Trade Topics

The Caledonian Hotel, Napier, was recently totally destroyed by fire.

A fire in the rear portion of the Oroua Club, Feilding, was fortunately discovered and extinguished before any serious damage was done.

The Hawera Licensing Committee refused all applications for 11 o'clock licenses.

Mr. S. F. Hedlund, late of the Prince of Wales Hotel, Hobson-street, has purchased a lease of the Turanganui Hotel, at Gisborne.

Alterations are being effected to the entrance doors of some of our local hotels to comply with the wishes of the present Licensing Bench.

Messrs. A. H. Nathan last week removed to their new premises in Customs-street East.

It is reported by cable from London that a scheme is in progress for the amalgamation of the brewing firms of Burton and Co., Thomas Salt and Co., and Allsopps Company.

In connection with the big sly grog raid, which was recently made in this city, no less than 36 persons were summoned to appear at Court.

The Rangitikei Licensing Committee met last week. The renewal of the license of the Hunterville Hotel was adjourned for three months, and the Court ordered that meanwhile the house should be thoroughly repaired. The license of the Harris Hotel, at Taihape, was also adjourned for three months. The police reported that the house had not been properly conducted, but if the improvement now being shown was maintained the license would then be granted. An application for another wholesale license at Hunterville was refused, and a new application for a wholesale license at Taihape was also refused.

During the hearing last week of a charge of drunkenness against a prohibited person named Thomas Reynolds, it was stated that defendant was fond of taking fits outside hotels, so as to obtain medical treatment.

For being found on licensed premises during the currency of a prohibition order, Jane Fleming was last week fined £2 and costs.

The new Grand Hotel in Willis-street, Wellington, and which is now rapidly approaching completion, is the tallest building in New Zealand.

Sergeant Williams, of the local police force, has been transferred to Gisborne.

The man Riley, who murdered a barmaid named Rose Arnold in Sydney last March, and then attempted suicide, has been pronounced insane.

At the Hunterville Court recently a Chinaman named Ah Duck pleaded guilty to two charges of sly grog-selling at Mataroa. He was fined £15 and £20, or in default one month's imprisonment on each charge. The Taihape constable called on the Chinaman in the disguise of an old man, and pressed for a drink on the ground that he was ill. A small amount of grog was seized.

At the annual meeting of the Dunedin City Licensing Committee several licenses were granted conditionally on certain improvements being effected. Three applications were adjourned, ten bottle licenses were renewed, and one application was adjourned, as the Court was doubtful if the members of one firm could hold two licenses in different shops.

The Wakatipu Licensing Committee has decided not to issue conditional licenses in connection with sports gatherings or affairs of the kind.

The disclosures at the recent sly grog prosecutions led to Sub-Inspector Gordon declaring that he attributed cases of Sunday drunkenness to the sly grog shops.

Tenders are called for alterations to the Waverley Hotel, in Queen-street.

The premises adjoining the Waitemata Hotel, on the Queen-street frontage, are being dismantled with a view of enlarging the bar accommodation of the hotel.

Mr. Arthur M. Myers, chairman of directors of the Campbell-Ehrenfried Company, Ltd., is due to arrive from Sydney next Sunday.

William Richardson figured among the defendants in the recent sly grog cases. We are informed that this is not the gentleman of the same name who says things in Queen-street on Sundays and incidentally passes round an inverted bell-topper.

Samuel Walker, lately hotelkeeping at Dargaville, has called a meeting of his creditors.

Auckland hotelkeepers were the first in the Trade to decide to close their front doors in honour of the funeral day of our late Premier, also their bars during the time of the memorial services.

The inquest concerning the death of the Rev. Father McGrath, who lost his life in the fire at Tapanui, was held last week. The jury's verdict was that Father McGrath's death was due to misadventure through the accidental destruction by fire of the Farmers' Club Hotel on the morning of June 8.

Mr. Fred W. Brunette is now mine host of the Commercial Hotel, Normanby. This hotel is one of the most up-to-date houses in the Taranaki district. Electric light has been installed, and travellers may rely on receiving the best attention. Being only a short distance from Hawera, those attending the race meetings may find it especially convenient to put up at this hotel, as the stabling is second to none. Mr. Brunette is well known throughout the colony, and was engaged in the Railway Workshops for a period of 16 years. He will also be remembered as bandmaster of the Newmarket Band and the Napier Garrison Band, and will no doubt receive a fair share of the public patronage.

ORGANISED HOTELKEEPERS.

Within the past few years the hotelkeepers have given ample evidence that they have taken to heart the constant advice of their friends and of the "moderate" party in liquor matters that the best way to save themselves from extinction is to cooperate with "the enemy" in the matter of keeping undesirable characters out of the hotelkeeping business. For this they deserve such credit as is due to common-sense when it goes hand in hand with righteousness but it is plain that a system of self-inspection by the Trade is open to abuses. In a case heard before the Bruce Licensing Committee, in which Richard Cornish applied for the transfer of a license, his counsel complained that unfounded rumours had been circulated against his client, and hinted that the Licensed Victuallers' Association was endeavouring to damage Cornish by way of reprisal for his refusal to join its ranks. Counsel urged that as a matter of general policy all objections against applicants for licenses or transfers should come through the police. Theoretically, the contention is a perfectly sound one, and, so far as we know, it receives the support of actual practice. The Licensed Victuallers' Associations, properly managed and organised on a policy of rectitude, can do much to exclude improper persons from the ranks of hotel licensees. In this respect there is something to be said in favour of compulsory membership of the Association. But it is revolting to every instinct of liberty to force a hotelkeeper, whether he likes it or not, to join any private trade association whatever. The instinct of a "close corporation" is to boycott outsiders, and to coerce them into surrender. Were the Licensed Victuallers' Associations purely Good Conduct Associations, organised primarily and solely to ensure the hotels being in the hands of men of high character, such coercion would be as proper as the coercion would be as proper through its laws, applies to every member of it. This high aim, however, is not the sole business of the associations, and the intrusion of other aims at once destroys the virtue of such compulsion as is alleged in the case of the Bruce licensee, and makes it a positive impropriety. While giving the organisations of the Trade every credit for the improvement effected in the conduct of hotels, we hope that they will not undo that good by injudicious "boycotting" tactics.—"New Zealand Times."

TAKING CHARGE.

A sailor named Alfred Betts, belonging to the U.S. warship Baltimore, pleaded guilty before Mr. W. G. Riddell, S.M., at the Police Court last week to damaging several articles of furniture, valued at £2 2/6, the property of Patrick Quinlan, licensee of the Thistle Hotel, and further to assaulting the licensee.

Sergeant Hendry, who prosecuted, stated that at about a-quarter past 10 p.m. on Tuesday the accused visited the Thistle Hotel, and on being asked whether he had paid for his