

## AN EXPENSIVE JOKE.

A startling explosion occurred at Kelly's Hotel on Saturday night last, and caused a good deal of excitement in the street; but the affair proved to be an attempt on the part of several boarders to have a "joke," and frighten the licensee, who had occasion to remonstrate with them for firing crackers. They obtained an explosive, the exact force of which they did not know, and fired it into one of the rooms. Before doing so, they covered the explosive with a bucket, the bottom of which was blown out, and some glass smashed. In protesting against the use of these crackers, Mr Kelly, the licensee, was assaulted, and on Monday morning, at the Police Court, Joseph Coleman was charged with the offence. Mr Fitzherbert, who appeared for the accused, said that the affair had to do with the Guy Fawkes celebrations, and had been meant as a joke. Coleman had been wrongfully accused, and under provocation had struck Mr Kelly. The Bench considered the offence a very serious one, and fined accused £5, with an alternative of one month's imprisonment in Mount Eden gaol.

## RACECOURSE LICENSES.

Referring to the trouble that cropped up last week in connection with the granting of the licenses for the racecourse booths at Ellerslie, the New Zealand "Herald" says that for the past 20 to 25 years it has been the custom of the Auckland Racing Club to offer the booths at their meetings for sale by public auction or tender. The publicans who buy these privileges take upon themselves the responsibility of getting the necessary permission of the Licensing Committee to sell, and a special provision is made under the Licensing Act, whereby in such a case it is competent for a chairman of a licensing committee to issue the necessary permission, provided two of the committee approve of the same. In accordance with the usual practice, the publicans who secured the privileges for the Auckland Racing Club's Spring Meeting, which commences to-day, applied to each member of the Parnell Licensing Committee for the necessary approval, but it appears that they were unable to get this, as each member declined to give it unless some other member did so. A meeting of the committee was called for Saturday morning to discuss the matter, but no one attended, and another meeting was called for yesterday morning, at which there was a full attendance. The committee, it is understood, then signified that they were not prepared to grant the licenses, and gave as their reason that the Auckland Racing Club had no right to offer privileges for the sale of liquor without first conferring with the committee. It was pointed out by counsel in attendance, that this had nothing whatever to do with their clients, and that the Auckland Racing Club had no status in the matter, and that it, as it was contended, the Auckland Racing Club had slighted the committee, this should not prejudice their clients' applications. The committee, however, decided that they would not grant the application for the first day, for the reasons stated. An adjournment, until two o'clock, was then applied for, in order to secure the attendance of the president and secretary of the club. These gentlemen attended at two o'clock, and after some discussion it was decided to grant the licenses. The press were not admitted to either meeting.

## MORE SLY GROG-SELLING.

A middle-aged woman, Sarah Jane Brown, pleaded not guilty before Mr R. W. Dyer, S.M., at the Police Court last Friday to having sold beer to J. W. Robinson on September 3, and to A. Christiansen on September 3 and 4, without being licensed to do so. Sub-Inspector Gordon conducted the prosecution, and Mr J. C. Martin appeared for the defendant.

Sub-Inspector Gordon said that in consequence of information received two constables visited the defendant's house, and while there they were supplied with liquor.

Constable Christiansen gave evidence as to visiting the house on September 3 and 4. On the first-mentioned date he visited the house at half-past seven p.m. Mrs Kelly (lately deceased) received him, and took him into the kitchen. Later Mrs Brown offered him some whisky, but he told her he preferred beer. Shortly afterwards Mrs Brown went out, and returned with several bottles. Three were opened, and witness asked defendant what was the price, and she made a reply in Maori. Witness said, "Is it three shillings you want?" and the defendant replied, "Yes." Later the defendant said to Robinson, "Aren't you going to turn it on, old boy?" Robinson replied, "Yes," and he paid 3s for more beer. Next night witness returned alone, but Robinson was there before

him. They were playing euchre when a knock was heard at the door. Defendant answered it, and came back and informed them that it was "Granny," and she would not be back for half an hour. Witness said, "This is very dry, can't you give us something to go on with?" Beer was supplied by the defendant, and 3s was paid for it. Mrs Brown then went away and he had not seen her since.

Constable Robinson gave corroborative evidence.

Mr Martin said that there were two witnesses for the prosecution, and the defendant, who had a different account of the affair, was the only one for the defence. "I am not going to put her in the witness-box," said Mr Martin.

"You are undoubtedly right, Mr Martin," Mr Dyer remarked.

Continuing, Mr Martin said the defendant had been left practically deserted by her husband some years ago. She had children dependent on her and they were well looked after, two of them attending school regularly. Speaking of the offence, "the men had invited it," said Mr Martin. On the first night there was no beer until the defendant had gone away and got it at the men's request. The two charges for September 3 were practically one.

"Had the defendant been a man, I should have made a sentence of imprisonment right away," said Mr Dyer. "Fining for sly grog-selling is no use." Continuing, His Worship said that he would take into consideration the exceptional circumstances of the case. The defendant had little children dependent on her. "But," said Mr Dyer, "if Mrs Brown doesn't mend her ways no consideration will be shown." On the first charge the defendant was fined £10 and 7s costs, on the second she was convicted and ordered to come up for sentence when called upon, and on the third charge she was fined £20 and 7s costs. In regard to payment, four weeks was allowed in which to pay the fine. At the end of that time, if the fines were not entirely paid, Mr Martin informed Mr Dyer he would apply for an extension of time.

## MIXED METAPHOR.

The English Bar is familiar with some rare specimens of accommodating metaphor, as, for instance, the aquatic opening: "These gentlemen have fished about until they have found a mare's nest, and on that they hang their bill." The latest addition to this class of mixed utterance comes from a defective agency, which states that its officers "thought they had a good clue, but it exploded."

## OUR NATIONAL BEVERAGES.

Whisky, undoubtedly, is one of the most important and interesting of our national beverages. It has been the national beverage par excellence of Scotland and Ireland for many centuries, and the greatly increased consumption and popularity of "the wine of Scotland" in England during the past fifty years warrant the assertion that it has become one of the leading national alcoholic beverages in the latter country also. The reasons for the great rise in the consumption of Scotch whisky in England are manifold, but chief among them may be mentioned the evolution of the art of scientific blending during the last thirty years or so, its recommendation by the medical profession for many purposes both in health and disease, and, lastly, the excellent value for money which it represents.

We are not concerned here with the question as to "what is whisky," for this is a matter on which the Law Courts have not yet pronounced a final judgment, but, even if it were settled, we doubt whether a purely academic question as to whether a certain article has the right to a certain name or not is of sufficient interest to the general public to warrant our entering at length into this aspect of the matter. A brief description, however, of the different types of spirits known to the general public as whisky will not be without interest. There are two main considerations involved in the preparation of whisky—namely, materials and methods of manufacture. With regard, in the first place, to materials, it may be broadly stated that whisky is a spirit obtained from the cereal grains. Among the most important of these are barley, rye, oats, wheat, and maize. As far as the materials are concerned, whisky-making consists in the conversion of the starch contained in the grain into sugar, of the latter into alcohol, and finally of the separation of the alcohol from the non-volatile substances in the "wash"—that is to say, the fermented saccharine solution which forms the ultimate product of the first part of the process. Scotch pot still whiskies are generally made from malted barley; other whiskies (Irish and American) usually from a mixture of malted barley, with a proportion of unmalted grain, such as barley, rye, oats, and maize (Indian corn). The preparation of the raw materials for distillation is very

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similar in all cases, whether the result is to be a malt or grain, or pot still or patent still whisky. If barley, or for the matter of that, any other cereal grain, is steeped in water for a number of hours, and is then spread out in a thin layer on a malting floor, it starts germinating, and during its growth produces a number of ferments or enzymes, among which is a substance called diastase. Barley is generally used, as being the most convenient form for obtaining it. This diastase possesses the property of converting starch into sugar, and what is of great importance is the fact that the quantity of diastase formed is much greater than that necessary for the transformation of the starch in the particular grain in which it has developed. The importance of this will be appreciated when we point out that this enables the brewer or distiller to make use of a considerable proportion of unmalted grain, thereby saving the expenses of malting. After the malt has germinated sufficiently it is allowed to wither, and is then dried on a kiln. The well-known smoky flavour characteristic of many whiskies results from the circumstance that peat fuel is employed for this drying operation, the products of combustion of the peat being passed directly through the grain. The next operation consists in converting the starch of the malt, together with the starch of any "raw" or unmalted grain that may be employed, into sugar, and this is done by "mashing" the starchy material with hot water in a huge vessel called the mash tun. The liquid flowing from the mash tun consists of a watery solution of sugar, and in order to convert the lat-

ter into alcohol yeast is added. The yeast induces fermentation, and this fermentation results in the transformation of the sugar into alcohol. Besides the alcohol, however, small quantities of other volatile substances, usually termed "impurities" or "by-products," are formed. Among these may be mentioned the ethers, the acids, the aldehydes (the latter standing midway between the alcohol and the acids), the higher alcohols or "fusel," and lastly a substance termed furfural. This mixed alcoholic liquid is called "wash," and is subjected to distillation, either in a pot or a patent still. The pot still is a huge copper vessel provided with a high swan neck, the latter being connected with a condensing coil surrounded with running water. The still is heated by means of either direct fire or steam coils. The liquid that comes over—i.e., distills—consists of alcohol and water together with impurities. In order to concentrate the alcohol and to remove part of the impurities a second, and frequently a third, distillation is necessary. Highland Malts, Lowland Malts, Islays, and Campbeltowns are the four distinguishing makes of Scotch Whisky, and are all practically produced from the same material in the above way, the chief difference being the type of pot still used and the way in which the material is treated. A difference is also caused in the manufacture of the malt, more or less peat being employed in the kilning, more being used in the preparation of Islays and less in the Lowlands. The patent still consists of two towers, called the rectifier and analyser respectively, which are divided into a number of compartments. It accomplishes in one operation