



THE LESSON FROM INVERCARGILL.

We wonder if the recent disclosures at Invercargill, which brought to light the wholesale manner in which sly-grog selling is carried on, will have the effect of opening the eyes of those prohibitionists who are frantically appealing to the Dominion people to do as Invercargill did, and vote No-license. These self-imposed alleged reformers have so enwrapped themselves with their own views as to what is good and what is not good for the world in general, that they will not, in fairness to the average man, look at any side of the situation except that which pleases them. In view of the condition of affairs that exist in Invercargill, the repeated references to that electorate, and the prayers offered up in thanksgiving that it had gone dry savours entirely of the ridiculous, and could never emanate from any party except one composed of self-righteous bigots. How dry this electorate has gone one can well imagine from a perusal of the sly-grog cases that have cropped out since the hotels were closed. Coming to a case in point, we may refer to the last big case that was brought before the court in that place, where a man and woman pleaded guilty to the offence of sly-grog selling. No defence was offered, the case being deliberate and systematic. It was no haphazard case, as both defendants had been repeatedly warned, but the nefarious trade they were carrying on was of such a highly profitable nature that the warning had not the slightest effect. The female defendant had openly stated that she in one day had sold four cases of whisky and twenty gallons of beer. Police evidence proved the fact that one hundred and seventeen gallons of beer and eighty cases of whisky had been sold since April 18th, and, they added, that was probably only half or a quarter of the amount sold. Truly an appalling state of affairs. And it is to these people and their like that the prohibitionists would hand us over.

Much has been made from time to time of statements from leading citizens, clergymen, and even from the Inspector of Police himself, of the delightfully reformed state of Invercargill under no-license law. The plain, unvarnished, though disgraceful tale, as evidenced by this last court case, must come as a rude awakening to those who are wont to point to Invercargill as the city wherein all is peace, owing to its being a no-license area. The police supervision required for many public-houses would be insignificant as compared to that required for even one such as carried on by the defendants in the last case. And it may be taken for granted that if these people found the business such a lucrative one, they are not by any means alone in the sly-grog trade of Invercargill.

It is to be hoped that such cases will open the eyes of the electors to the fact that prohibiting legislation is hopeless. The prohibitionists, in their avowals, make it clear to the public that they are anxious to impose any condition of public or social life, however degrading, humiliating, or law-defying, so long as they attain their end of no-license. Very little imagination is required to picture the awful state of affairs that would result from no-license being carried in a large seaport like Wellington or Auckland. We have seen from the police courts the conditions in other places, and such conditions would be intensified and multiplied in the larger cities.

It is incredible in view of what goes on in no-license areas, that the prohibitionists have the audacity to even suggest, let alone to ask, that we should put ourselves under the no-license ban. We are asked, pressed, and preached to, to exchange a system of police-supervised licensed houses, which meet in an open and respectable manner the demands of the public, for one of plying, lying, and

spying in a form which can only pervert a respectable citizen into a drink sneaker, and one which in itself is lowering and degrading to honesty and common sense.

THE DISTURBING ELEMENT.

It is still persistently rumoured that the present session will be disturbed by efforts on the part of the prohibitionists to have our licensing laws still more altered to meet their views. Insatiable as they always are, they have not yet arrived at the stage of prohibition made easy that they desire. The success which has hitherto been theirs in the handling of politicians and the foisting of nobodies on to electors, as members, has, we have no doubt, turned their brains just a little bit more. We understand that the programme for this session is to have a shot at the members, many of whom are on their last political legs, with a double-barrelled gun, one barrel being the bare majority, and the other Dominion option. While no doubt one or both barrels will make an effective bag from the number of already tottering politicians, we do not think that the House will stand any nonsensical tinkering with the present Licensing Act. Should the prohibitionists in their blind bump-tiousness seek to have either or both of these provisions passed into law, then we not only predict for them positive failure, but foresee a strong reaction against them. The bare majority, as applied to other people's property, is so outrageously unfair that the politicians who espouse this suggestion will be brave indeed. The spectacle of any district being handed over for three years to be wet or dry on a bare majority vote is too ridiculous for discussion. More so, indeed, is the one which embraces colonial option, which would mean, if carried, that the sale, manufacture, or importing of liquor of any description would be absolutely prohibited. Our Dominion would then be dry with a vengeance. It is well that the Alliance has shown to the people the insatiable appetite for alleged reformation that they possess. All along the line, from the time of the first enactment of local option law, have these prohibitionists been pandered to, their wishes have been given effect to, and they have had practically their own sweet way. And yet they are not satisfied. Behind the specious plea to give no-license a trial, lies the intention of wiping all liquor clean out of the Dominion. Electors would do well to awake to this fact, and find out from each no-license pleader what the intentions of the prohibitionists are, if they once gain the upper hand.

We hear that Mr. T. B. O'Connor will shortly take over the City Club Hotel, Shortland-street, he having purchased Mr. M. H. Walsh's interest in that house. We are pleased indeed to welcome Tim back again to the ranks of the trade, it being a safe assertion that there is no more popular landlord in local circles than Mr. T. B. O'Connor.

The New South Wales police have found it necessary to again issue a circular warning business people that forged bank notes are again in circulation.

In reference to the agitation that has been going on in England lately over the importing of foreign hops, a London paper remarks that American hops are raised for the most part by cheap Chinese or Japanese labour on the Pacific slope of the United States, and that these hops are being dumped into England at a price which seems to show a determination to starve the English grower and drive him out of the field.

Speaking at a mass meeting at Birmingham recently, Mr. Asquith said he staked his own political fortunes, and as far as he could the fortunes of the Government and party, on the Licens-

ing Bill. Mr. Asquith added that he had been told he was foolhardy, but his own belief was that he had never done a wiser thing.

A man who was convicted of bigamy at Hastings the other day, pleaded that he was drunk at the time. It is surprising the number of offences that are alleged to have been caused by drink, but we imagine that the one of bigamy is quite the very latest.

In a recent interview with a press representative in Wellington, the Prime Minister stated that it was not intended to make any new appointments to the Legislative Council.

The greatest agitation continues in England against the Licensing Bill. At a monster meeting held a few days ago, Mr. Balfour declared that the bill was one of spoliation, and hopelessly doomed to failure, since it was impossible to gain a great moral end by grossly immoral means.

Last Saturday morning Mr. Justice Edwards gave his decision in favour of plaintiff, in the case of Mr. E. B. Dufaur v. Messrs Smiths and Ken-ealy, in connection with the Te Puke Hotel. The hearing of the case was a lengthy one, occupying five days, and necessitating some 150 volumes being referred to on law points. Stay of execution with respect to damages and costs has been allowed, and fourteen days allowed to find security in the event of an appeal.

Mr. Harry Parker, late of Wellington, and who was well known in various Societies in the Empire City, has taken over the Empire Hotel at Feilding, and will be pleased to see all old friends, who will be assured of a hearty welcome.

Those who are accustomed to travel through New Zealand cannot but be struck with the marked improvement which has taken place during the last few years in the way of hotel accommodation. This improvement is general right throughout the Dominion, but nowhere is it more noticeable than in the Empire City. Old and out-of-date buildings are constantly being replaced by modern structures, where every convenience is provided to ensure the comfort of the travelling public. One of the finest of the newer hotels in Wellington is Barrett's. The new landlord, Mr. Gow, has made wonderful improvements since he took over the business. The place has been thoroughly renovated throughout and visitors will find the appointments are excellent, every comfort and attention being paid them by the proprietor and his staff.

The renowned Mr. Dooley says, "the best the prohibitionists have done so far is to make drink wrong to take, hard to get, and terrible bad when you get it."

Governor Hoke Smith, of Georgia (U.S.A.), a "dry" State (much boasted of by the Prohibitors) is considering the question of issuing a call for a special session of the Georgia Legislature to consider "the failure of Prohibition."

Says a writer in the "Daily Mail":—Mr. Birrell, at Eastbourne, said—

"They saw the brewers purchasing hundreds and hundreds of houses, and tying them, thus condemning the population to drink their beer—and not their best beer." The allegation that the beer supplied to tied houses is inferior beer is untrue. The practice of brewers is to supply their best to their own houses, and for this very simple reason a tied house bears conspicuously upon it the name of the firm providing the beer. If inferior beer is supplied at one house, all the other houses owned by the same firm suffer in repute and in profit. No brewer would be such a fool as not to give of his best to his own houses.

At Balclutha last Friday the premises occupied by Geo. Fisher, boarding-house keeper, were raided by the police, and in a well under the floor of the chaff-house 56 bottles of whisky were found.

So small was the quantity of arsenic in hops, said a witness before the British Parliamentary Committee on the hop industry, that a man would have to drink 36 gallons of beer a day for many years before it would harm him.

Sir Thomas Dewar stated that there is at present enough whisky in the world to meet the consumption for four and a-half years, though not a gill more is made in the meantime.

The teetotallers of Boston are quite convinced that claret is a non-intoxicating drink. They drink it without so much as a twinge of the corner of their conscience at the mayor's annual dinner, and when during Lent their ranks are temporarily swelled by those who try to mortify the flesh, the latter draw the line of mortification at claret. That, at any rate, they think, does not minister to the pleasures of the palate or induce drunkenness.

In connection with the charge against the chief steward of the Moeraki of selling wine to a passenger after the steamer had berthed at Sydney the Court found that though the Moeraki was registered in New Zealand defendant was liable to the local liquor law, and the Court had jurisdiction. The Court fined him £30, or, in default, two months' imprisonment.

John Currin, a resident of Oamaru, for giving an order to a publican to send liquor into a no-license district without supplying the latter with his name and address, was fined £10, and costs 12s.

Mr. F. A. Andrews, formerly a resident of Picton, and now employed as head malster by an English firm, induced the firm to introduce New Zealand hops into his place of employment. Previous to this, English hop factories held the opinion that New Zealand hops, generally speaking, lacked condition, but a consignment was received there at 95s a hundredweight, and they were subsequently declared equal to the best Californian.

Packet Licenses caused considerable discussion at the meeting of the Kaipara Licensing Committee last week. The local No-License League lodged a petition against the granting of these licenses to the passenger steamers trading on the Kaipara River.

