

The LICENSED VICTUALLERS

ACCUSER AND JUDGE.

It has been decided by the council of the churches in Dunedin that, with a view to giving effect to the recent vote in favour of reduction, vigorous efforts be made to nominate a strong temperance committee at the next election of the licensing bench. In this announcement we have the very root of the objection to the existing method of appointing licensing committees, to which reference has more than once been made in this column. In the recent licensing contest at Dunedin, and all over the colony, there were two parties, the prohibition and the anti-prohibition. These occupied, so to speak, the position of plaintiff and defendant, and now one of these parties in Dunedin, having secured the verdict of the jury, desires to adjudicate and fix the proportions of the award or penalty, whatever it may be convenient to call it. It is, of course, true that in certain cases jury does fix the amount to be paid, but in those it is assumed that the jurymen are governed by the principles of strict justice, and are acting with a full and particular knowledge of every detail of the transaction. It would be ludicrous to assert that the electors have come to a calm and dispassionate conclusion upon the issues submitted for the licensing poll. They are in the great majority of cases quite incapable of assimilating the arguments pro and con, and have been swayed by frenzied appeals based on half truths and mere sentiment. Nevertheless, we do not seek to get behind their votes. So long as the present law remains it must be carried out, and if the specified majority of the people vote for reduction in the number of hotels there must of course be a reduction. The law, however, has made provision for the exercise of discretion. A minimum and maximum have been fixed, and between these limits the licensing committee may exercise authority. It may close five per cent or it may close twenty per cent of the hotels, but if the committee is to be composed of members of the prohibition party this discretionary power is an idle thing, since the maximum number will assuredly be taken. The framers of the law unquestionably contemplated impartial consideration of the issue, but it is difficult to see how this can be secured so long as the committees are elected under the present system.

A PROHIBITION APOSTLE.

An old friend of ours has come to light in the State of Victoria as the founder of a Prohibition party on the lines of the organisation that is aiming at converting New Zealand into a Tom Tiddler's ground. His name is John Hosking. He came originally from America, the land which also gave us the saintly Worthington; and it is a curious circumstance that one of Mr Hosking's first achievements here was to unmask the apostle of the Temple of Truth. He was then a Wesleyan minister at Christchurch, and had he performed his task with a not quite so obvious desire to please the gallery the colony might have felt grateful to him. Not that Worthington stood in need of much "exposing," because he had been "shown up" by his own acts, and, until he started on the swindling racket, he was, after all, only one of the great army of religious quacks to which, if some of Mr Hosking's whilom admirers are to be believed, that gentleman himself belongs. The itinerant principle operating in the Wesleyan Church subsequently brought Mr Hosking to this province and planted him at Hamilton, where he was soon to acquire a huge reputation as a prohibitionist and a bitter foe to all who were engaged in the licensed victualling trade. In the vehemence of his tirades and the venom of his vituperation he was a match for

some of the street orators we have had in Auckland; but it was his ill-luck, or his evil destiny, to be bitten by the political flea, and he burned to go into Parliament. The Church objected, and he told the Church to mind its own business. But the Church was not to be flouted, and the reverend gentleman (who, by the way, is an L.L.D. of some minor American university) was forced to choose between politics and the pulpit. He imagined that he had a soft thing on, and he chose politics. Rapidly ensuing events showed that the "thing" was not so very soft, and that in order to make it as soft as possible the reverend doctor would have to relax his hitherto unflinching prohibition principles. He relaxed, and to the unspeakable horror of the Rev. Mr Gittos, boldly advocated licenses in the King Country! His recantation did not save him, and Mr Lang beat him badly at the polls. After this, and for a time he clung to the prospect of a seat in the Upper House, though he never had the ghost of a hope; then he fell back on religion, and started a church of his own at Mount Eden; and lastly he finds himself in Melbourne. Where he has been in the interval we do not know, but there was a kind of poetic justice in the circumstance of his "getting in at the death" in connection with Worthington. And now he is once more on the prohibition stump! Do men gather figs from thistles?

POLICE ETHICS.

Policemen, like the members of certain other trades and professions, grow callous in respect of the "cases" with which they have to deal, but occasionally it gives one a little shock to find the quality of mercy unduly strained. At the Auckland Police Court, on Friday last, two women were charged with habitual drunkenness, with being persons of bad moral character, and generally on the score of vagabondage. Sad as it is to say it, one appeared to be quite incorrigible. She occasionally performs short spells of work, but for many years past she has dwelt chiefly amongst the dregs. Her, the Bench, after consideration, sent to gaol for six months, on the reasonable plea that she would be better there than amongst her usual surroundings, if only for a short period. The other woman's record was somewhat similar, save that she had devoted longer spaces of her time to honest work, and had been an inmate of the Salvation Army Home. One of the Sisters of the Home was in Court, and expressed her readiness to take the woman back again, so the Justices who presided agreed to give the unfortunate woman another chance. And here is where the peculiar manifestation of police ethics came in. Sub-Inspector Black remarked that one woman was as bad as the other, and he did not see why one should get six months, and the other nothing. Now, assuming that the woman is susceptible in any degree to the reforming influence, the Army Home is a better place than the gaol, but the truth is that we are, as a people, drifting into a belief that the cure for every evil is to be found in repression. Moral suasion and the active exercise of philanthropy are giving place to prohibition orders and a clamouring for shutting up the public houses. We are seeking to cure a cancer by poulticing, and merely aggravating the disease.

COMMISSIONER TUNBRIDGE.

The newspapers are by no means unanimous on the subject of Mr. Tunbridge's retirement. The "Napier Herald" thinks the Colony will be able to get along very well without him, as the real authors of the reforms for which that officer has been given the credit will remain active after he has gone. These, we are assured are Mr. T. Taylor, M.H.R., "and those who were working with him." Of course, we might have expected this. Everything that makes for the good of the race and the uplifting of humanity in general, comes from the Prohibition Party. It is to be eternally deplored that the Party came so late into our history. There is no telling what the British Empire might have become if Alfred the Great, the Con-

queror, the Lion Heart, the Black Prince, Harry the Fifth, Elithebelt, Cromwell, William of Orange, Marlborough, the Pitts, Wellington, and Nelson, had been leading members of the teetotal crusade! Our own opinion is that our relations with India would have been reversed, and that the Great Mogul would by this time be laying down the law in London or Winchester. This by the way. The Napier evening journal says the retiring Commissioner, during his tenure of office, "made one very good proposal, and iterated it time after time. It was that in order to simplify licensing law, licensed bars should be closed to all when closed to the general public." "The Government," pursues the writer, "in our opinion, would have done well to adopt this suggestion." The Government had too much sense. The law as it stands is admirably calculated to disgust people who come to our shores in search of change of scene, of health, and of pleasure; also it is sufficiently stringent to tempt those innately honest to break it upon occasions. If this suggestion was the best that Commissioner Tunbridge had to offer we agree with the "Telegraph" that his departure will not be a national disaster. It is singular, and worthy of remark, that Mr Tunbridge's resignation is invariably spoken of in connection with the licensing law. We should like to be informed concerning his share in the diminution of crime, for instance. Has the re-organisation of the police force reduced the number of felonies? The raison d'être of the police is the protection of the citizen, his life, limb, and property. In New Zealand the chief end of the policeman appears to be to watch the hotels and to run in persons who take a pint or two in excess of their carrying capacity.

PROHIBITION.

The Melbourne "Age," of January 12, reports:—"A prohibition league was formed at North Melbourne on Friday evening, on lines similar to those existent in New Zealand. The organisation is to be styled the Central Prohibition League of Victoria, and branches are to be established. The Rev. John Hosking, of the Congregational Church, Collingwood, who has played a part in the New Zealand prohibition campaign, was elected president, and Mr S. Painter, of North Melbourne, vice-president. Representatives were present from South Melbourne, Williamstown, Brunswick, Fitzroy, West Melbourne, and East Melbourne; and a committee of management was appointed, including several officers of the Good Templars Grand Lodge. The platform of the league was ordered to be printed, and will soon be available for distribution. Subscriptions were freely handed in, and much enthusiasm was shown. Public meetings will be held in various centres, and one of the first efforts of the league will be to secure the necessary legislation to enable a prohibition vote to be taken.

PROHIBITION IN ASHBURTON.

The hearing of the petition against the recent local option poll at Ashburton concluded on Thursday, before Mr C. A. Wray, S.M. All the grounds of the petition were abandoned except those dealing with the alleged over-crowding of two smaller polling booths, and the non-simultaneous delivery of local option and electoral voting papers. The former ground was practically abandoned yesterday, and the legal argument centred in the second. Evidence was given that at two booths officers handed voters local option papers first and electoral papers afterwards, although no inconvenience was caused thereby. The Magistrate's decision was reserved.

THE NEW LICENSING ACT.

The new Licensing Act, which came into operation in England on January 17, promises to work a small social revolution in England. Drunkenness, which for some time has been a social misdemeanour, punishable only if accompanied by disorder, is now a legal offence of itself. Moreover, the habitual drunkard becomes a fully labelled outcast of society. The police are drawing up a black list in each district of all persons who have been convicted thrice of drunkenness during the year. The list and photographs will be supplied to all publicans, who will be heavily fined, and, on repeated offence, will lose their license if they sell drink to those blacklisted. Persons treating habitual drunkards will be heavily fined, as also will intoxicated persons in charge of infants. The police have received instructions to apply the law with common sense, lest excessive stringency in carrying out the law beyond the limits of public approval should make it a dead letter. One London magistrate, evidently fears this result, for he says: "We are becoming a soberer people every year without the aid of legislation. Coercion is rather a reflection upon English self-esteem. Speaking off the Bench, I think the new Act a trifle superfluous."

INSIDIOUS ARGUMENTS.

The Chief Justice, Sir Robert Stout, having furnished the enemies of the Wanganui River tourist traffic with arguments, is endeavouring to aid the prohibitionist further by an attempt to show that the number of people going to Rotorua would not be diminished if no-licenses were carried. Speaking to a newspaper interviewer at Wellington, he said:—"There are no fewer than twenty-six boardinghouses and three hotels in the township. There is also accommodation at Whakarewarewa. About three-fourths of the visitors stayed at the boardinghouses. "What struck me about that was that we need not be alarmed about the cry that people will not visit our tourist resorts if there are no hotels at which they could get liquor. In this connection it may be worth mentioning also that I stayed at an hotel at Wairakei, and that while there I noticed that not one-quarter of the guests took liquor. It does not seem necessary, therefore, to consider the occasional tourist in dealing with our liquor question."

Trade Topics

The Criterion Hotel, Ohinemuri, and the Duke of Marlborough, at Russell, are likely to change hands shortly.

We learn that Mr Donald McLeod has purchased Mrs Hand's interest in the Settlers' Hotel, Whangarei. The sale was effected through Messrs Whitehead and Son.

It is understood that Mr James Shaw, late of Paeroa, and more recently of the British Hotel, Auckland, will shortly assume the control of one of the Te Aroha hotels.

Mr George Loram is about to take over the Star and Garter Hotel, Coromandel, having bought out Mrs Stehr. Mr Whitehead, the well-known hotel broker, is at present at Coromandel arranging for the transfer.

We have it on the best authority that the Trade does not intend to take any active or concerted part in the forthcoming election of licensing committees. It is felt that the matter is one that may be left to the general good sense and love of fair play of the people, in this part of the colony at any rate, and, indeed, in all places, save where the prohibitionists have succeeded in carrying their point at the polls.

The case of Mr George Fisher, M.H.R., who was charged with that, being a prohibited person, he was found on licensed premises, has been adjourned. The friends of the unfortunate gentleman represented that he had been injuriously affected by over-indulgence in drink, and said they were endeavouring to procure his admission to the Home for Inebriates at Waitati. The Magistrate commented strongly on the conduct of certain persons who had supplied Mr Fisher with liquor since the prohibition order was granted.

An old customer of a Scotch whisky store, while passing very early one morning, saw the office boy cleaning up the window of the aforesaid store. "Hech, Sandy," quoth he, "ye may tell your people to send me three gallons more from my usual vat, a'wm a-thunking 'tis your vat K." "I'm affree, sar, we canna, fur we've just cleaned out vat K, by the master's orders, and we've found a deed cat." "Hech, joost the saame whisky, lad, will do. A'win a-thunking that deed cat's the reason why a've so often seen a fur upon me tongue of late."

It is not every hotel proprietor that can afford to have his place decorated like a palace—but it is at least within the power of all to keep their places clean from cellar to garret. Fine fixtures come high; cleanliness is cheap; but of the two, the latter is decidedly the more essential in the hotel business. Whether your establishment is a fine big hotel in a large town, or a small one on a small town, you should see to it that everything about your place is clean and spick and span.

The following is from a copy of the "Times" of the year 1802:—"One of the Dover innkeepers, who lately complained to a French gentleman that his house was greatly infested with rats, and that he would willingly give a considerable sum to get rid of them, was, on the following morning (and after the Frenchman had received his bill) accosted by him, "Sir, I shall tell you vich way you shall get rid of de rat." "I will be obliged very much to you, if you can," replied the landlord. "Vell, den, only charge de rat as you charge me, and I will be d-d if de rat ever come to your house again."