



THE PREMIER'S DILEMMA.

THE position of the Premier, between the "Demon" of the Liquor Traffic and the Deep Sea of Prohibition, or, if the metaphor pleases better, on the twin horns of the Democracy, has been more than once referred to before. It is evidently becoming intolerable, if not untenable. Nobody but Mr Seddon—perhaps no man who valued his reputation—would have hesitated so long to do justice as between the parties. The Premier says he is only the people's mouthpiece, that he is where he is for the purpose of registering the people's decrees. Surely that is not statesmanship! It may be the sort of statesmanship that would have satisfied Danton, or Marat, Robespierre, or any other leader of bandits, but it is not the position that a Gladstone or a Salisbury would have held for a single moment, unless they felt that the will of the people was based on the principles of justice. Great men formulate a policy and lead a party; Mr Seddon, apparently, is willing to let anybody manufacture policies, but he will not support any of them until he is assured that it will be carried by an overwhelming majority, in which case he will adopt it, though it violate every principle of justice and commonsense upon which he has been nurtured. No country wants "statesmen" of this kind. We are not doing any violence to the Premier's portrait; he has drawn it with his own hand exactly as we have presented it.

Mr Seddon has gone so far as to say that he recognises that the Trade has interests; we give him credit for holding the view that the property of a brewer or a publican is just as sacred as the property of any other man in any society that claims to be guided by the principle of order in mutual support—as all civilised societies are. He knows that this view is not shared, that it is repudiated with contumely by the Prohibition party. Yet he is prepared, if "the people" (meaning the majority) say the word, to trample the rights of one section of the community under his feet! A patriot, and especially a Liberal patriot, would lay down his life rather than participate in the infliction of injustice upon any man. Mr Seddon has raised his voice often against injustice; he has spoken on halting tones, and with tears in his eyes about the "right" of the old people to a pension; but when other "rights" which are much clearer, are threatened, all he has to say is "the people must decide"—which is what Pontius Pilate said, what the leaders of the Jacobin Club said, and what the murderers and fire-raisers in every century since the world began have said.

REDUCTION MADE EASY.

A SOUND AND WORKABLE SCHEME OF COMPENSATION.

(London "L.V. Gazette.")

(Conclusion.)

These alternative solutions are so full of sound commonsense and practicability that we earnestly commend them to the serious consideration of the Government. By fixity of tenure Mr Tripp does not advocate the creation nor the recognition of absolutely impregnable rights. His proposal, briefly stated, is that all existing licenses should be put upon the same footing as the ante 1849 beerhouses, and should only be forfeited upon one or more of the four grounds specified in the Act of that year, and further that no new licenses should be granted for a term of years without at least two old licenses surrendered for each new license granted. If it is objected that, under this scheme the reduction in the number of public-houses would not be effected with

sufficient rapidity to satisfy the new idea of the justices, the alternative proposal could be adopted. This scheme contains two provisions: First, that no new license should be granted for a given period of (say) seven years except in new districts; and to meet admitted requirements, and in each case the new license should be granted only upon the surrender of three old ones within the radius of any county. Secondly, that no license should be taken away for misconduct unless full and adequate compensation be given to all interested.

But, it may be argued, this latter scheme brings us up against the question which has all along proved the crux and the stumbling block of the whole problem—how is the compensation to be raised? Mr Tripp replies to both these queries with confidence and cogency. He echoes the fact that has often been referred to in these columns, that since the passing of Lord Goschen's Act, in 1890, about £440,000 has been annually raised for compensation purposes and applied to other uses; but he dismisses the idea of endeavouring to seek restitution of this quite adequate sum on the ground of its impracticability. But he turns instead to the temporary war tax of 1s per barrel on beer and 6d per gallon on spirits—taxes which were levied for specific purposes, and have remained in force for reasons that are not so conspicuous. This tax must sooner or later be repealed, and Mr Tripp recommends, as soon as this desideratum has been accomplished, that, "in order to have the matter settled once and for all, and to assist the Government in dealing with this thorny matter, a special compensation tax be imposed of, say, 3d per barrel on beer and 3d per gallon on spirits, such taxes to be paid solely to form the nucleus of a genuine compensation fund." This combined tax—one half of which would fall upon the brewers and the remainder upon the drinkers of spirits—would bring in £900,000 a year, and would in seven years yield an aggregate that would secure the purchase of all the so-called superfluous licenses.

This scheme presupposes the early repeal of the war tax, which, considering that the war has now been over for many months, is not too much to anticipate. It is, in any case, reasonable to suppose that the Government would not attempt to impose a further charge upon the Trade while the present war tax is in existence. When this is taken off it will be time to consider Mr Tripp's further suggestions as to the allocation of the funds. As these are merely matters of detail, and are, in our opinion, open to debate, they may be safely shelved until their consideration is a matter of more immediate moment.

THE FARMERS AND PROHIBITION.

DEPUTATION TO THE PREMIER.

A large deputation, representing the hop and barley growers of the provincial districts of Marlborough and Nelson, waited on the Premier, on Thursday last, to place before him certain disadvantages that would, they considered, be cast upon them by prohibition. It was pointed out that of the average annual crop of a million bushels of barley over one-third came from these two provinces. The crop in Marlborough last year was valued at £45,000. Landed property to the value of three-quarters of a million sterling was under cultivation in these provinces. At Motueka, there were 800 acres in hops last year, and £52,000 in hard cash was paid to growers. Nine thousand pounds per annum came into the district for malt. If these industries were taken away great loss and hardship would be caused.

The Premier admitted that if prohibition were carried the effect on barley and hop growers would be considerable. He went on to say that it was his duty to give effect to the will of the people. If it should be that the majority of the people favoured prohibition, then effect would have to be given to that wish. To bring in legislation with the view of assisting the deputation was a much easier thing to suggest than to do. He almost dreaded the name of the Liquor Bill, so great a fight would it cause. It was a matter more for the people than the Government. He believed that the great vote cast at the last poll for no-license was not wholly prohibitionist, but was made up of people

who voted no-license for reasons not far to seek. There was no doubt the vote was reform, and that the people were dissatisfied with the regulation of the traffic under existing conditions. There was no doubt that the conduct of people connected with "the trade" had not been what it should be. He could not say that the people were to be blamed for their vote. They had practically said: "Well, we have tried regulation, and it is not effective; very well, we will meet the trouble in another way." There should be a change in the law for certain breaches of the Act. Owners of hotel licenses and barmen or barmaids should all be made responsible. There would be far fewer breaches. However, it was for the people to decide on the broad question. It was his earnest desire to ascertain the desires of the electors, and then to give effect to those wishes.

Trade Topics

The vineyards in the wine growing districts of Rejolais, France, have suffered greatly from the depredations of night flying moths, amongst which the pyralid was the most prominent. The following method of killing these insects has been adopted, and "The Electric Review," pronounces it a success:—"Calcium carbide and water are combined for the generation of acetylene gas, and burners giving a light of ten candle power are mounted above each generator. Six ounces of carbide is said to be enough to keep the flame going for as many hours. Eight inches below the burner is adjusted a shallow circular dish, 20 inches in diameter. A little water is poured into this, and a thick film of kerosene is deposited on the surface of the other fluid. Thus is completed a trap to which the moths are attracted by the flame. According to the authority just quoted, these generators are set up about 500 yards apart, and are put in action at dusk, preferably on dark nights. On the first night one lamp caught 4600 pyralids and 218 moths of other kinds. During July the lamps average 3200 insects a lamp a night. The expense of the lamps is reported to have been 2 cents a night each, or 1½ cents a night an acre. It is said that this method of catching noxious insects is more efficacious than any method which has been tried before." Special cases require special remedies, but that is no reason why moths should be caught indiscriminately, many friends as well as enemies being thus destroyed. It is never safe to use moth traps unless the "catch" is examined by an entomologist to determine of what it consists.

The wine supplied to the Pope during his last days is said to come from the famous cellars of the Hotel de Ville at Bremen, which contains some dozen cases of holy wine, which have been preserved for more than 250 years. They are almost priceless. If the cost of maintaining the cellar, payment of rent, interest upon the original value of the wine, and other incidental charges are considered, a bottle of this wine has cost £400,000, each glassful £54,000, and a single drop could not have been sold under £40.

The "Herald" correspondent at Wellington writes:—"It is understood that many of the prohibitionists of the House are not overjoyed at the prospect of licensing legislation being brought down this session. As a matter of electioneering tactics they would have preferred the Premier to maintain his non-intervention attitude, so that they might secure a large moderate support. At present they have little hope of the Government bringing down a Bill to suit the views of the prohibition party, and that the party is not strong enough in the House to amend the Bill to suit their own views. However, should the Bill not meet with their approval the prohibitionists may be sufficiently strong to block it altogether."

According to the report of the trade of Bordeaux and district for 1902, there appears an improvement in the export of clarets to the United Kingdom, the amount being steadily on the increase since the commencement of the century, and when we note the great increase in the amount of bottled clarets taken in 1902 by the United Kingdom, it gives hope that the taste for higher classed clarets is once more returning, probably the result of the two excellent vintages of 1898 and 1900, which wines recall the excellent bouquet and flavour of the best years of the seventies.

At the Supreme Court on Friday, Sarah Campbell, a half-caste Maori woman of about middle age, pleaded not guilty to the charge of selling spirituous liquor (whisky), at Taumarunui (King Country), without a license. The Hon. J. A. Tole prosecuted, and Mr J. R. Reed was for the defence. Two witnesses were called, and both stated that they had gone to the place for the purpose of procuring a conviction, having been engaged to that end by the police. They received payment for obtaining convictions. Counsel having addressed the jury, His Honor, in summing up, said the question for the jury to decide was as to whether the testimony of persons so employed was to be regarded as reliable. The jury, after a short retirement, returned a verdict of not guilty, and accused was discharged. Accused was further charged with selling whisky without a license to Wm. Dennis and a Maori named Hinaki at Taumarunui, in the King Country. Mr J. R. Reed appeared for the defence. Prisoner was found not guilty and discharged. His Honor, in commenting on the case, said he could not understand the verdict, seeing that on the same evidence the jury in the case against Alexander Campbell had brought in a verdict of guilty. His Honor passed sentence on Alexander Campbell and Joseph Gardiner, who had been found guilty earlier in the sittings of selling liquor without being licensed for the same in the King Country. In fining each prisoner £10, with the alternative of one month's imprisonment, His Honor said the people who sent liquor into the King Country deserved to be punished equally with those who sold it. Crates filled with bottles of spirits and beer were sent into that district.

Mr Arthur Chamberlain has at last climbed down over the tenancy question at Birmingham (says the London "Licensed Victuallers' Gazette"). He has been sticking out on behalf of the tenants for six months' notice to quit. However, as in every instance where application is made for a transfer, he insists upon the attendance of the out-going as well as the in-coming tenant, he has had an opportunity of questioning the retail traders on the subject, and he seems to have been somewhat surprised that they are quite willing to accept, and in fact prefer a quarterly to a half-yearly agreement. The whole question was practically brought to an issue by the stand taken by Messrs Allsopp and Sons. Counsel on their behalf stated that the company were unable to depart from the position they had been taken up, and if the magistrates could not see their way to concede the quarterly agreement, the firm, much as they would regret to take such a course, would have to ask the Bench to state a case for appeal. This placed the Bench in somewhat of a dilemma. The justices thought the best thing they could do was to retire and consider the question. The result was that all the applications involving the three months' tenancy question were granted. But for the fact that a powerful brewery company were willing to go to any expense to test this question, the whole of these transfers would doubtless have been refused.

Old Winter comes with chilly breath
Bringing sickness, sometimes death;
Yet every family, praise the saints,
May now be free from chest complaint.
At winter's cold and winter's rain,
We can laugh with might and main,
For we have the remedy pure
W. E. WOODS' GREAT PEPPERMINT
CURE.