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MESSRS. ARTHUR CLEAVE AND COMPANY, LIMITED.

Proprietors N.Z. Sporting and Dramatic Review, Licensed Victuallers' Gazette.

Dear Sir,

At the Annual Meeting of the Licensed Victuallers' Association of New Zealand, held on the 19th October, 1910, a resolution was unanimously adopted constituting the Sporting and Dramatic Review, the official organ of the Association for the Dominion.

H. J. WILLIAMS.

Secretary N.Z. L.V. Association.

Wellington, October 20, 1910.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE LICENSING QUESTION.

NO BARE MAJORITY LEGISLATION

MR. MASSEY'S TACTFUL REMARKS.

The New Zealand Alliance lost no time in running Premier Massey to earth after he took office, but they found their quarry equal to their wiles, because he point blank refused to surrender. It is to the Prime Minister's credit that he put his refusal to promise legislation on the bare majority issue on the broadest and least controversial grounds, by pointing out that the new Administration already had been handicapped by the time wasted on account of the unsettled state of the parties, and that it was unfair to expect Parliament to occupy its time during the coming session in dealing with such a thorny problem as a Licensing Bill. Mr Massey candidly told the deputation that Ministers and members alike would be fully occupied during the ensuing Parliament with matters of more direct concern to the country.

In putting forward the claims of the No-license and Prohibition extremists the best argument that could be adduced in favour of the bare majority was contained in the Rev. W. J. Comrie's remarks. He said: "We desire to represent that the present three-fifths majority, which was necessary to secure the carrying of No-license or of National Prohibition, was an unfair and well-nigh impossible barrier to the attainment of their ends. There was a certain proportion of the community which it was impossible to turn by virtue of interest, by virtue of their associations with the traffic, by reason of prejudice, and it was almost impossible, in face of that, to get the necessary three-fifths majority. The new Zealand Alliance asked that Mr Massey, as Prime Minister, should take steps to secure a more democratic, a more reasonable method of dealing with the question."

It is in a degree gratifying to lovers of true liberty to have an open confession from the Alliance people that they regarded it as almost impossible to get the necessary three-fifths majority to carry their selfish objects, and we cannot help feeling some sympathy for them in the dilemma to find logical reasons for expecting a Government to introduce legislation to deprive the people of this land of their birthright—personal liberty.

Mr Massey, in his reply, was perfectly fair when he remarked that since he had been in Parliament, and perhaps for years before, the licensing question had not been considered as a party question; and he considered that was the attitude in regard to it which should be adopted in future.

As to a Licensing Bill being introduced, he wanted to be perfectly candid. There was not much probability of a Licensing Bill being introduced this session, and he would tell them why. They knew that owing to the unsettled state of parties and political matters prior to the opening of the present session, a great deal of time had been lost. There were

a number of extremely urgent matters to be dealt with, and he was afraid there would be little time left for licensing.

As to the all-important question of majority, the Prime Minister said he wished to remind the deputation that the licensing question figured very prominently at elections, and there was hardly a member who was not pledged on the subject of the majority. If there was a majority of members in favour of a bare majority or any other course, that majority must prevail. He himself was one of the very few members of the House who was not pledged on the subject. When the matter came up

UNREGISTERED BARMAIDS.

AN AMENDING BILL SUGGESTED.

The Alliance deputation that waited on the Prime Minister to urge the introduction of legislation to make a bare majority operative in Local Option and National Prohibition polls, also asked for legislation to prevent the employment of unregistered barmaids.

In reply, Mr Massey said that he was in the House two years ago when the Licensing Bill was being put through, and he knew perfectly well what took place. The evident intention of Parliament was that existing

ed by the Rev. Mr Comrie that no more clauses would be needed to give the bare majority than to abolish barmaids, Mr Massey replied that a Barmaids Bill could be got through without any difficulty. It is really not the size of the measure, but its character, that makes the essential point. A Barmaids Bill would make just as good a peg to hang a score or two of drastic amendments upon as an Absolute Majority Bill, but Mr Massey evidently regards the former as beyond the pale of controversy. Seeing that the clause in the Act of 1910, which was supposed to have abolished the employment of barmaids other than those previously employed who elected to register under the Act, did not encounter any considerable opposition, and has only proved abortive through a technical defect, the Premier considers that Parliament would have no difficulty in putting through a clause to carry out its admitted intention. There probably would be no difficulty as long as the issue remained thus limited, but it could only be limited by the forbearance of all parties.

WOWSERISM AS A POLITICAL FACTOR.

NEW PARTY SUGGESTED.

Since the Alliance received only cold consolation from Mr Massey when they interviewed him early in the month, it is now suggested that the Temperance Party have determined to bid for political recognition as an independent party, and endeavour to force legislation. For a couple of decades now Parliamentarians have studiously set their faces against the Licensing Question being forced to the front as a party question, and have consequently combated every attempt to allow the Prohibitionists and No-license advocates to take shelter under the flag of either political party. They have been kept in neutral ground, and developed into a roving body of sharpshooters and political bandits. If they now decide to come into the open and fight, the result will doubtless be to the advantage of the Dominion, because it will have the effect of restoring honesty and sincerity in political life. For years members of Parliament have "hedged" on the question in the fear of losing support from any one section of electors. A straight-out declaration from every candidate for Parliamentary honours would probably rid politics in the Dominion of a good deal of the cavilling humbug that now exists in reference to the Licensed Trade.

On this subject, "Fairplay," that stalwart champion of liberty in Australia, makes some pointed remarks. In an article entitled "Wowserism Plays a Lone Hand," this journal says: "When both the older parties were fawning on the Prohibitionist vote, and both equally prepared to deceive the extremists if they got the chance, there could have been neither honesty nor sincerity in the political life of the country. If the black flag of Prohibition is hoisted every politician, equally with every individual in the community, must definitely decide how he is going to go. The position in the past has been well understood. The Wardites on the one hand and the Masseytes on the other paid court to the Prohib's. They sought to obtain the patronage of that party without giving many hostages in return. In both parties were men who leaned to Prohibition, but neither party was prepared to shoulder the odium of being proclaimed a Prohibition party. . . . Possibly it is just as well that the wowsers should segregate themselves from all the old parties in politics. If that happens it will put an end to all trimming and time-serving, and will bring men of all shades of thought into line to oppose those who are aiming a blow against human liberty. We venture to say that the formation of a separate Prohibitionist party in New Zealand means the suicide of that party. And that is a most desirable thing."



HERBERT CLIFTON,

Who possesses a splendid voice and provides a star turn at the Opera House.

for consideration his vote would go in the direction in which his judgment dictated. "My sympathies," he added, "and the sympathies of those with whom I am associated, are in the direction of minimising and if possible abolishing the evils of intemperance."

If the Temperance Party received any solace out of Mr Massey's concluding remarks concerning his sympathies, we can assure them that the Prime Minister is only voicing the honest sympathies of the great majority of the people of this land. But we must remind the Alliance brotherhood that the fact of a small percentage of weak-minded and physically unfit people falling victims to intemperance, is by no manner of means a fair reason why moderate people should be deprived of their liberty to satisfy their own tastes.

barmaids were to be registered, and that afterwards further registration could take place. He believed that to be the intention of Parliament, and the intention of Parliament would be given effect to, even if it became necessary to introduce a special Bill for the purpose this session.

He was not so clear on the subject of bars. He would refer the matter to his colleagues and the Crown Law Office.

Commenting on this, the Wellington "Post" says: "He (Mr Massey) indicated the introduction by the Government of a special Bill to deal with the question of barmaids as possible, and even probable, yet the measure would be liable to the Premier's objection that even a Bill of a single clause would give both sides the opportunity of opening up the whole licensing question. When it was urg-