

It would be idle and foolish to occupy time and space with arguments to prove the enormity of the crime of drunkenness, and the frequency of the commission of this crime. But there can be no doubt that both the drinking of spirituous liquors and drunkenness are social and moral evils of the first magnitude. This is conceded on all hands, and the only question is, how can these evils be prevented or, at least, abated?

The answer of the Dunedin meeting of last Tuesday is, give us "A Local Option Bill," and something, even much, will be done to lessen these evils. We doubt this very much, and are rather inclined to think that, if brought into operation at all, such a Bill would aggravate the evil. Nor is it clear to us that such a system is practicable. Must there be two thirds of the registered rate-payers against granting licenses in a district, or will two-thirds of those who vote suffice? This is a very important inquiry. It is well known that on all occasions of popular elections or voting two-thirds of the registered electors hardly ever come to the Poll. It is also well-known that a very few active persons can easily manipulate a majority to favour their own interested purposes. In this way national jealousies and antipathies may be roused—nay, would inevitably be roused, and not only would grievous injustice be done to individuals, but the peace and sweet charities of neighbourhood seriously compromised for years.

Of course anticipations as to results can be little else than conjectural on both sides, that is, on the part of both opponents and advocates of such a measure—experience alone can decide between them. But is it wise to run a great risk for the sake of the small advantage to be hoped for? It seems to be idle to expect to make men sober by Act of Parliament authorising two-thirds in localities to prevent the granting of licenses, whilst the private manufacture of fermented liquors is possible, and spirituous drinks can be procured in adjoining neighbourhoods.

A Local Option Bill appears to us Utopian. But there are things which legislation can do and ought to do. It could prevent, if not altogether, at least almost altogether, adulteration, which is the greatest cause of the many miseries so eloquently deplored by the various speakers at this meeting; it could punish drunkenness in a more rational manner than it does at present; it could so punish the drunkard as to stamp on him the brand of infamy, and it could easily reduce the number of licensed houses, which all admit is very much too large at present. If it were possible to frame an Act of Parliament that would certainly put a stop to drunkenness, we should without hesitation advocate such an Act; but as this cannot be, we hold that care should be taken, lest in endeavouring to remedy the evil, the only effect produced should be an aggravation of it.

We entertain a profound distrust of all proposals to effect moral and social reformation by majorities resulting from the use of the ballot-box. Such a result is generally nothing more than the outcome of multiplied ignorance and wide-spread inexperience, of passion and unreason, of prejudice and religious antipathy. Some people look upon a majority, no matter how obtained, as something heavenly, but only, however, when it happens to be on their own side; and we have always remarked that the great advocates of popular elections on all subjects are precisely the men who think majorities will be always found favouring their own views. They never advocate the popular vote on subjects in reference to which they feel they would be hopelessly in the minority. The agitation in favour of a Local Option Bill is a case in point. If these men thought that two-thirds of the ratepayers in localities would certainly or even probably approve of the establishment of licensed houses for the sale of intoxicating drinks in their neighbourhoods, would they advocate a Local Option Bill? It is clear they would not. It is also clear, therefore, that they do advocate such a measure because they think it would secure the carrying out of their views.

The regulation of the liquor trade is a subject that should be discussed and settled by men competent to undertake the task, and not by chance majorities in localities. It should be settled on well-defined general principles, and not in accordance with the ever varying caprice of an unstable multitude.

A STRANGE death occurred at Linden on Saturday last, which should afford a warning to persons engaged in the care of children. An infant, fifteen months old, swallowed a screw-nail with which it had been playing, and died in a short time afterwards.

TRUE LIBERTY.

THE plaint of the Holy Father over the altered state of Rome is not the least pathetic part of his splendid Allocution, so full, at the same time, of a lofty courage and an all-embracing pity. It is the old story repeated once more. The Church has been proscribed, and in her place riot and disorder reign, and shamelessness walks abroad in the open light of day.

It has been so from the first. Hardly had the great apostasy of the sixteenth century taken place, when Europe stank with excess; grotesque and hideous caricatures of Religion started up on all sides, and every man became his own interpreter of right and wrong, and morality suffered so that even those who had led the revolt, and, by the example of licentious lives, paved the way for such a state of things, declared the condition of the "reformed" countries to have deteriorated from what it had been before the voice of the seducer had been heard in them. And if now impiety and obscenity have invaded the streets made sacred by the presence of the Vicar of CHRIST, and are only prevented from reaching his ears and insulting his sight by his close seclusion in the recesses of the Vatican—a palace become a prison—it is that the movement which they name "Reformation," spread more widely under its later name of Revolution, has reached the foot of his throne and surges there, longing to destroy him, but as yet of insufficient daring for so enormous an attempt.

Let not any one think, however, that to confound the "reformation" begun by the rabid German monk, who came foaming out of his convent some three centuries and a half ago and trod all his solemn obligations in the mud, with the revolution that has already once culminated in the Reign of Terror, and that will again culminate, in Heaven knows what further demoniac prodigies, is an injustice. "From that first necessary assertion of LUTHER'S," says CARLYLE, "you, self-styled *Papa*, you are no Father in God at all; you are—a chimera, whom I know not how to name in polite language!—from that onwards to the shout which rose round CAMILLE DESMOLINS in the Palais-Royal, '*Aux Armes!*' when the people had burst up against all manner of chimeras,—I find a natural historical sequence." And again he says—but this time, in part, falsely,— "It (the French Revolution) is properly the third and final act of Protestantism." It was not its final act; but for this the world is now ripening. A clear warning of its rapid approach has been sounded in the trumpet notes of the Pope's Allocution, which our columns, according to the desire of his Holiness, have published in the extreme south-east, and than which, in whatever point of view it be taken, no more wonderful utterance has ever appeared in the pages of a newspaper. Well might the Italian Government hesitate in permitting its publication, and well might they shrink from the temerity of its repression.

But it is not our part to criticise that which is above criticism; we have to do with the state of Rome enslaved to the endurance of licentiousness, and where, by a sad but necessary companionship, the conventicles of false worship stand side by side with the exhibition of ribaldry and uncleanness. And this they call liberty—the right to hide the truth, and substitute in its place all that can vitiate the mind. What slavery is so debasing?

We desire to think well of all the world, but when we consider the applause that has accompanied the Piedmontese occupation of Rome, and when we hear men and women of good repute sustaining the cause of the usurper, and read in journals and publications of high standing panegyrics on "United Italy," our utmost charity can but force us to hope that these people and writers are, in truth, so blinded by prejudice, that it is impossible for them to see things as they actually are; and we are more than ever determined to insist upon Catholic education, and the necessity of Catholic reading for Catholics, so that they may be presented with the truth, and given the means of choosing the good and rejecting the evil, in which true liberty consists; for, as for those who desire anything else than this,

License they mean when they cry Liberty.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

ON Sunday last, during the 11 o'clock Mass at St. Joseph's Church, Dunedin, his Lordship the Bishop of the Diocese read the Pope's Allocution, delivered to the Cardinals assembled in consistory on March 12th. His Lordship exhorted the congregation to pray earnestly for the Holy Father, the more especially as the present occasion was that of his Golden Jubilee. It did not require any