

contemporary:—'The Roman Catholic vote goes largely to the Ward Government, for the reason that the Prime Minister is an adherent and strong supporter of that Church. Tapanui district *being largely Presbyterian* does not see eye to eye with the Government party, and is anxious for a change of Administration.' The italics are ours. The suggestion that the Presbyterians of Tapanui oppose the Ward Government because the Premier differs from them in religion, is a particularly stupid libel on the Presbyterians; and we can well believe the correspondent who writes to tell us that the local members of that body strongly resent the odious insinuation. The best answer to the statement was given the day after it appeared by Tapanui itself, when the town gave a very handsome vote, indeed, to the Government candidate in the election.

### The Licensing Poll

On election night the interest in the political contests—at least so far as Dunedin is concerned—was quite overshadowed by anxiety as to the No-license and Prohibition results. We use the word 'anxiety' advisedly, for no milder term can describe the feeling prevailing in each of the contending camps. The figures for Chalmers electorate—which now includes the Taieri, and which was confidently expected to go 'dry' on this occasion—were awaited with feverish impatience; and the results for Dunedin City—which so recently as a month ago gave every indication of steering straight towards No-license—were also the subject of more than ordinary interest. So far as No-license is concerned—as our readers are by this time aware—the position throughout the Dominion is absolutely unchanged. Not a single new district has carried No-license; and, on the other hand, in the nine electorates in which No-license already obtained, the effort to bring about restoration of licenses has been unsuccessful. In three of these—Ashburton, Ohinemuri, and Masterton—there was a majority in favor of restoration, but the votes fell short of the required three-fifths. Taking the Dominion as a whole, the feature of the Local Option poll has been the marked increase of the vote in favor of Continuance.

\*

In the poll on the Dominion issue there is a strong majority for National Prohibition, but a majority which nevertheless falls substantially short of the required three-fifths. At the time of writing—(there are still a few returns to come)—the figures are:—for National Prohibition, 255,262; against it, 203,201. The vote for National Prohibition is, in round numbers, over 20,000 short of the number required to carry that proposal. There is a fairly strong feeling amongst a large section of electors that a third alternative—that of State Control—ought to be submitted to the country. In any electorate in which this issue was carried the existing licensees would be bought out at valuation, and would then be installed as managers of the establishment on a salary from the State. Any political party which would have the courage to make this proposal a plank in its platform, would be assured of a very considerable measure of support.

### Elections Then and Now

The elections last week were notable for their orderliness. Except for the carriages and motor cars busily plying the streets, there was practically no outward sign that a great political contest was in progress, and that other still more fateful issues were being decided for another three years. It is the great achievement of the secret ballot method of voting that it has gradually abolished the intimidation, the disorder, and the corruption to which the 'open' system was so liable. There are those who miss the tornadoes of 'fun' that whirled around the old open-voting single polling station for borough or county, with its hustings, its stormy oratory, the bantering of candidates, and the rough-and-tumble physical contests between the two parties; and even so gentle a soul as the late Dean Hole felt himself constrained to lament, 'with regard to the elections, that the mirth of the land is gone.' 'To a fighting nation like ours,' he says, 'the election fifty years ago was a crisis which evoked all the strate-

gies and energies of an offensive and defensive war. While potent landlords, clever lawyers, active agents, fluent speakers, and humorous satirists were coaxing and intimidating, the Blues met the Reds by torchlight, and lost no time in tearing each other's flags into ribbons and in punching each other's heads. The big drum of the Tories was first perforated by the trombone of the Radicals, and subsequently smashed by their ophicleide (large trumpet), and the drummer, after belaboring his enemies with the two sticks, retired a sadder and a lighter man. The mothers, wives, and daughters of the intelligent electors were occupied at midnight and in the early morning, like the armorers on the eve of Agincourt, with busy hammers, or rather with diachylon, closing up wounds and applying sponges and poultices, and bandages and slabs of raw beef, to the swollen faces of their warriors, who appeared next morning wearing on their countenances a combination of the colors of either party, purple and red, and manifesting a strong reluctance to renew the battle without pecuniary and alcoholic inducements.' But people with little taste for the gladiatorial side of life will welcome the peace and order and decorum which the ballot has thrown around this exercise of a grave citizen right and duty.

\*

The purchase and sale of votes which was so prevalent under the old-time system had occasionally its humorous side; and this is hit off by Dean Hole with his usual light and happy touch. 'As to bribery,' he says in *Then and Now*, 'there was neither secrecy nor sense of shame; the electors knew the market value of their votes, and where they could obtain it. Sometimes, when the contest was very severe, a few astute economists would abstain from voting until a few minutes from the close of the poll when they could name their price as masters of the situation. I remember an occasion when, under these circumstances, a coterie of a dozen of these free and independent electors, having been paid an extravagant sum for their votes, were assembled waiting for their conveyance to the poll. A carriage and four arrived, the horses and postillions being profusely decorated with the colors of their party. There was ample time for the brief journey, but the horses seemed to be under excitement, and at the crack of the whip they broke from a trot to a canter, and from a canter to a hand gallop, and instead of taking the turn which led to the polling booth, went past full speed, the coachman replying to the remonstrances of the voters, "Can't hold 'em; keep still, as you value your lives; they will stop at Highmore Hill." But Highmore Hill was three miles away, and they did not stop till they had reached the top opposite the Red Lion Hotel; and then the electors, having been paid their money before they started, and knowing it was too late to record their votes, refreshed themselves until the shades of evening fell, and they could escape on their return the derision of their opponents, by whom they had been so successfully duped. The coachman received a ten-pound note, which he well deserved, for he literally won the election in a canter.'

## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY

### ANNUAL REPORT

The following is the report of the Australian Catholic Truth Society for the year ended October 31, 1911:—

The report of the work of the Australian Catholic Truth Society for the past year, though it can claim no features of sensational interest, proves that the Society has grown in volume, developed in efficiency, and proportionately increased its responsibilities. It is mainly a record of persevering and increasing activity and of steady advance.

During the twelve months under review twenty-four distinct pamphlets have been published, the majority of which are of high merit. They are written by persons whose work could command a price in the open market, but that work has been done gratuitously for the Cath-