

credence to by some of the most reputable journals. The case, as now alleged—we emphasize the word—to have been explained in a letter alleged to have been written by Judge Burnette, who is alleged to have been the presiding judge at the trial, was simply that of a man who, having a deadly grudge against another, influenced the mind of a third person, who is further alleged by other journals to have been weak-minded, made this third person believe that his life was in danger, and successfully instigated him to kill the enemy. The actual killer was acquitted on the ground of self-defence, and the instigator was sentenced for murder. Judge Burnette, it is alleged, says that no defence was offered or thought of on the ground of hypnotic influence; that the only allusion to it was a passing remark by one of the counsel that “we might almost say that Gray possessed a hypnotic influence over McDonald.” We are sorry to have been hoaxed into seriously discussing the case, but we had plenty of good company in our credulity. And, after all, there was a verisimilitude about the report, which forms a pretty good excuse, seeing that not only is Texas a land of startling innovations, but that the question of hypnotic influence is assuming a prominence which may, it is not unlikely, lead, sooner or later, to its being seriously pleaded in court as a palliation of crime.

The Liquor Traffic.

WE cannot agree with those who say that the recent commission on the Liquor Traffic was a mere waste of time and money. Undoubtedly it has cost a good deal; but we cannot accept the theory that it was a mere device by which Parliament escaped from the responsibility of legislating on the liquor traffic. If members of Parliament were asked to pass a measure prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors, except for certain purposes, most of them—indeed, all who were not mere fanatics—could very properly make answer that they had not sufficient information to enable them to judge of the expediency of such a measure. It is quite easy to dogmatize on such subjects, on either side; but reasonable men do not dogmatize; they do their best to ascertain facts, to investigate principles, and to find out what is practically the best course to adopt.

On certain points there is no difference of opinion, or as good as none. For example, no one can deny that an immense amount of misery results from the excessive use of alcoholic liquors. It is possible that even here we make mistakes. In many cases in which we judge that men are bad because they drink in excess, it is probable that they drink in excess because they are bad. Still, there can be no doubt that much mischief has been done, especially among the poorer classes, by intemperance. Nor can it easily be denied that the social habits of our forefathers were such as were hardly worthy either of Christians or of reasonable creatures. Happily those days are gone by. A man who is drunk would no longer be compared to “a lord,” but rather to “a beast”; and if this is not quite justice to the beast, it is a kind of testimonial to the Lord and to the Upper Ten.

Even the most pronounced Teetotaler will hardly deny that temperance has made great strides during the last fifty or sixty years, and that, among the educated classes, drunkenness is a thing so exceptional that it is seldom to be met with. Even among the labouring classes it is far from common. If this is the case, it would seem not unreasonable to hope that the process might be continued until public opinion was so educated that intemperance would be practically unknown.

But here we are met by a new contention. It used to be said that total abstinence was the only remedy for drunk-

eness; further, that prevention was better than cure; and, thirdly, that it might be the duty of men who had never drunk in excess, and who were in no danger of drinking in excess, to become total abstainers for the sake of others; and such arguments prevailed with different classes of men. But now we are told that not merely the excessive use of alcohol is mischievous, but that it is not lawful for a Christian to use alcohol at all. Let it then be clearly understood that prohibition rests upon this theory. It would hardly be seriously proposed to stop the manufacture and sale of a thing which was a legitimate product of human industry, and might lawfully be used by human beings.

Are we prepared to accept these conclusions? Are we prepared to declare that it is wrong to use alcoholic beverages in any degree? We cannot say that we are. The utterances of medical science are extremely uncertain on this subject. Some recent statistics, if they are to be trusted, would seem to prove that the moderate use of alcohol, so far from being injurious to health, is an aid to longevity. If this is the case, it seems rather hard that hundreds and thousands of men who are quite capable of exercising self-control, and who actually do exercise it, should be deprived of some of the comforts of life for the sake of the small number who cannot control their appetites.

But there is another aspect of the subject. Supposing that temperate men should agree to submit to such limitation of their liberty as would cut them off from the use of wine and beer, would such limitation be for the good of the commonwealth? Here is a most serious question. We don't mean that it is the only one. The considerations already adduced are not unworthy of notice; and it may be that a majority of reflecting men will refuse to consider this last question. That is not merely conceivable, but is a fact beyond dispute. We may, however, for a moment turn our attention to the question of prohibition: and, as we have said, it is a very difficult one. On this point the conclusions of the commissioners are of real interest and value. Of the five members of the commission, Sir Joseph Hickman, Judge McDonald, Mr Gigault, Mr. E. F. Clarke, and Dr. McLeod, two had evidently made up their mind from the beginning, the one on the side of prohibition, and the other against it. Each of these endeavoured, throughout the whole enquiry, to bring out every thing that would tell on the side they espoused. We are not condemning this method. We are pointing to it, as an evidence that everything was brought out that could be elicited. The other three showed no partiality, but simply a desire to get at the facts. Indeed, there is some reason to believe that one important member of the commission began his work with a feeling in favour of prohibition, and ended by deciding against it. Four out of the five signed the report, declaring their inability to agree with those who regarded the manufacture of alcoholic beverages as a sin, and moreover pronouncing against prohibition as partaking too much of the character of coercive legislation, and as being incapable of being enforced.

This seems now to be quite established that whilst legislatures may pass acts for the prohibition of the sale of liquor, no administration can affectually enforce such a law; and not only so, but that the attempt to do so produces a variety of evils no less serious than the evil of drunkenness which prohibition is intended to prevent. The minority report is very much what might have been expected. The gentleman who signs it finds that the facts declared are in favour of prohibition. He began his inquiries with the firm determination that this result should be reached; and he reached it without any difficulty. We are where we were. But we have learned something. Perhaps the motto, *Festina lente*, has been enforced. Better to bear those evils that we have than fly to others that we know not of—especially when these latter would be of our own making, and the others have, so to speak, come to us.