

Temperance Column.

TEMPERANCE AND PROSPERITY.

Attention has recently, by the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, been very forcibly directed to the commercial relations between England and her Colonies and dependencies, and the public have now a much better idea of their value and importance than they had a year ago. Our Colonies trade largely with us, but as a people we spend as much on drink in seven months as is equal to the value of all the goods purchased from this country by all the people in our Colonies and Dependencies in a year. London alone, within the area of the School Board district spends nearly £14,000,000 a year on drink. That calculation is based on the assumption that, taking them as a whole, Londoners are neither more nor less sober than the average of other people in the country. London's annual drink bill is more than our national expenditure on our navy.

It is generally understood that the bank-notes issued by the various banks all over the country represent an almost fabulous amount of money. So they do; but if any one could get together every bank-note that is in circulation in the United Kingdom at the present time he would only have sufficient to meet the outlay on drink for four months. The value of our Postal and Telegraphic facilities is well-understood, and an idea of the great cost at which they are provided may be formed when we think of the vast number of post and telegraph offices, and officials, and messengers, of one kind and another there are scattered all over the country. But that cost is a trifle compared with the cost of the nation's drink. We spend more on drink in one month than all our Postal and Telegraph arrangements cost for a year. The question of railway rates and facilities has been much discussed lately. Cheap transit for passengers and goods is a matter of vital importance to a commercial community. We spend as much on drink in seven months as all our railways take for the conveyance of passenger and goods in a year. If the money now expended on liquor were devoted to the purpose, it would be sufficient to pay for throwing upon all the railways to carry without charge all the passengers and goods they now take, and there would remain a sufficient balance in hand to pay for a very large growth of free traffic.

We sometimes hear people talk of the advantages which other countries possess, and the chances there are for men to get on in Australia, or out on the plains of America, but what should we think of a country in which railways were free? Or to put the matter in still another light, and to suggest another use to which the enormous £125,000,000 might be put, who now expend it on drink? It would be a good idea to give every man's drink to provide him with

coals, gas, and water free. Houses, gas, coals and water for nothing! What country could equal that? What should we think of the commercial and social advantages of a people who possess such a boon? Yet our fellow-countrymen every year pour down their throats liquor for which they pay as much as would provide it. This expenditure on drink is about equal to a tax of £17 10s. per annum for every family in the land. During the last twelve years it has amounted to as much as would, if it had been invested year by year at 5 per cent interest, now have reached a capital sum which would have produced enough to have defrayed the whole of our national expenditure without taxing the people a penny. It is, of course, too late to redeem the past. The millions have been squandered and the liquor has been swallowed. But it is possible for us as a nation to avoid repeating the folly if we only have sense enough to do it.

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