

THE supporters of the Scott Act try to turn the tables upon Liberal Temperance by saying that the Liberal Temperance men themselves advocate prohibition with regard to whiskey. Of the whiskey at present drunk not a little might, without exaggeration, be called poison and prohibited on that ground. But what the Liberal Temperance men, or those who advocated the principle upon which the Liberal Temperance Union is founded, said was this: "Whiskey, or at least bad whiskey, not beer, cider, or light wine, is, as we believe, the real curse. If then drunkenness is actually prevailing and increasing among our people to such an extent that extreme measures have become necessary, let us go to the root of the evil; whiskey, if it is manufactured, will be drunk; above ground or under ground it will find its way to the lips of the consumer; let us embrace, therefore, the one effectual policy and shut up the distilleries, paying, as public morality requires, reasonable compensation to the distillers. Reasonable compensation we can well afford to pay, if prohibition is to add so much to our wealth and take so much off our taxes for police and prisons as the Prohibitionists declare." But the Prohibitionists vehemently refuse to grant compensation and have scornfully voted down the proposal, holding, it appears, as people of the same temper have often held before them, that whoever sets himself in opposition to the servants of God must be out of the pale of justice. "Then," say the Liberal Temperance men, "that overture falls to the ground: we are not, like you, above the law of ordinary morality, nor can we see our way to the promotion of public virtue by confiscation; drunkenness, we own, is bad, but, as we think, iniquity is worse. Still we are ready and willing to go with you in any measure which may practically discourage the use of ardent spirits, and promote the substitution of lighter and more wholesome beverages such as beer, cider, and light wines, especially light wines of native growth. In the possibility of forcing mankind all at once to give up fermented drinks which they have used since the beginning of time, we do not believe, and we see that all attempts of that kind have ended in disastrous failure." The most hopeful measure that can be adopted probably is a system of two licenses; a higher license for the sale of distilled spirits and imported wines, a lower license for the sale of beer, cider and native wines. If to this is added Inspection as a safeguard against adulteration we shall at least be embracing a policy consistent with reason in itself and not yet condemned by experience.

It is admitted, we believe, even by our Prohibitionist friends, that the Sunday Closing Acts in Scotland, Wales and Ireland have been a failure. Some months ago Mr. Agg Gardner gave in the *Fortnightly Review* the statistics which seem to place the fact beyond a doubt. In the portion of Ireland, for example, subject to the Act the number of arrests in two years for drunkenness increased from 118,291 to 137,385, though the population was diminishing, while in five cities exempted from the operation of the Act the number decreased from 60,621 to 39,638. In Wales a trial of six months sufficed to show the working of the Act. The inspector of the Cardiff police reported an increase of forty per cent. in prosecutions and of sixty per cent. in convictions, stating, in explanation, that a number of clubs had been established and that illicit drinking was carried on to a great extent. The inspector of Routh, another Welsh district, deposed that previous to the Sunday Act coming into force there was very little Sunday drunkenness and illicit drinking, and it was very rarely that any annoyance was caused by the people leaving the public houses; but that since the Act had been passed all his energies were required to keep anything like order in the streets. There were twenty houses, he said, where illicit drinking was carried on on Sundays, and four clubs with four hundred and forty-nine members. The Mayor of Wrexham observed at petty sessions that the Sunday Closing Act had trebled the charges of Sunday drunkenness in that district, and his remark was corroborated by the Chief Inspector of Police. In Ruabon the experience was the same, and indignation meetings were held to protest against the Act on the grounds of the crime and misery which it had created. Teetotalers themselves, Mr. Gardner avers, have joined in the chorus of condemnation, while a Roman Catholic priest said that the drinking clubs promoted drunkenness amongst young people and caused people to drink who had never drunk before, and the people who did drink before to drink more; that if the Act were repealed, as repealed it must be, things would get better; and that there was more drunkenness, more sin, more iniquity of every kind committed in Cardiff than ever there was before. When you lay upon people restrictions which their conscience, and the conscience of the community at large, refuse to ratify, the inevitable consequence is illicit indulgence, which besides the demoralizing effects of evasion, is sure to assume worse forms than open and permitted enjoyment. The total

amount of liquor consumed in the district under one system or the other is not the thing to be considered; it is not ordinary and moderate drinking that you wish to diminish, but drunkenness; and so far all experience proves that under the Prohibition system drunkenness is not diminished but increased. The fiasco of the Sunday Closing Act appears, as we have said, to be confessed even by the Prohibitionists themselves. Yet we have no doubt that those who, foreseeing the result, opposed the passing of the Acts were denounced by the Methodist clergy of Wales as serving the cause of the Devil. The Devil, it seems, can sometimes use blind enthusiasm for the practical furtherance of his ends as well as the love of drink.

"RUSSIAN Intrigue again" is the heading which, as a matter of course, is prefixed to the news of a rising in Afghanistan, headed by a filibustering chief, against the present Ameer. That the restless ambition of the Russian commanders on the frontier is at work we may well believe: on both sides a game of jealous and suspicious diplomacy is being constantly carried on. But a spontaneous outbreak among the Afghans is also a perfectly credible event. The tribes are unsettled, turbulent, predatory, arrayed against each other by blood feuds and subject to no centralized government, though they may for a time fall under the power of a vigorous Ameer. They are much what the Highland clans were before 1845, with an element of intrigue and cupidity added by the machinations and counter-machinations, the bribes and counter-bribes of England and Russia, to which powers they are evidently learning alternately to sell themselves. It is not likely that the tribal chaos will become order, and the present outlook is one of indefinite complications. The partition of Afghanistan, so as to bring the British and Russian Empires up to a common boundary, across which neither power could step without a regular *casus belli* and a deliberate intent, would be the most conducive to permanent peace; while the immorality of the proceeding might be deemed less on account of the absence of any united nationality among the Afghans. But the operation in the present temper of the two powers would be desperate. To invade Afghanistan for the purpose of bringing about a political revolution, certain to be reversed on the morrow, the course adopted by Palmerston and afterwards by Beaconsfield, is pronounced by the wisest Anglo-Indians the worst policy of all.

NOTHING could be better for the Mother Country at the present crisis than the accession to power of the Conservative Party by honourable means and under a wise and patriotic leader such as was Peel. This is our firm belief. Unhappily it is not by honourable means nor under wise and patriotic leaders that the Conservatives now come into office. Their conduct has been not merely a breach, but a repudiation, of public morality, and it brings a body of men who are nothing if not high-principled, and whose character is at this moment of the most vital importance to the State, down to the level of the lowest demagogues. The coalition with the Parnellites is a shameless application of the doctrine openly preached by Lord Randolph Churchill that the object of political strategy should be to gain the victory, no matter how, and leave moralists to say what they please. No one who knows Lord Salisbury's sentiments about government in general and Irish government in particular, no one who has marked his language and bearing throughout this Irish crisis, can doubt that he is far more of a Coercionist than Mr. Gladstone and Lord Spencer, or that their measures are mild compared with those which he would adopt if plenary power were in his hands. His genuine tendencies unquestionably are those of an Irish landlord, and one not of the least arbitrary type. Yet, under the influence of his devouring ambition and of his not less devouring hatred of Mr. Gladstone, he allows Lord Randolph Churchill to assure the Parnellites that if they will lend their assistance in defeating the Government on the Spirit duty the Crimes Act shall be abandoned, and the lives and prosperity of Irish Loyalists shall be left to the mercy of the Land League. Compared with this, what was the Treaty of Kilmainham or the Litchfield House Compact of former days? Lord Salisbury may perhaps say that it was not he, but Lord Randolph Churchill, that did it; but the use of unavowed agencies only deepens the disgrace: the fruits of Lord Randolph's intrigue have been accepted, and the intriguer has been taken into the Cabinet. Desperate efforts are being made by Lord Salisbury's personal adherents in the Press to prove that he is still at liberty to renew the Crimes Act; but friends only make his case worse by suggesting the possibility of his jockeying his confederates. But Lord Salisbury's conduct is the least part of the matter; the serious part is the demoralization of public life of England. After a little more of this, thoughtful men will begin to consider whether it is possible that the world should be well governed by party.