

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, AUGUST 6, 1888.

LIQUOR IN THE TERRITORIES.

The liquor question is again the all absorbing matter in the Territories. This question has long been the great bone of contention in the Territories, and recent official action has caused the agitation to break out afresh with redoubled energy. With the change of governors, have come changes in the liquor regulations, Mr. Royal having apparently taken it upon himself to institute certain new departures. Complaints were numerous against Mr. Dwyer's administration of the permit system, but Mr. Royal has succeeded within a few weeks of his coming into office, in working up a storm of indignation against his administration of the liquor regulations. Since Mr. Royal came into office, it is said individual permits to import liquor into the Territories have been granted indiscriminately to all comers, and thus prohibition in the country is rendered simply a farce. Indeed, there always has been a good deal of a farce about the alleged prohibitory regulations in the Territories, though in some limited sections of the country, more particularly the eastern portion, no doubt considerable benefit has been derived from the prohibitory regulations.

The wholesale system of issuing permits to import liquor into the country, has been followed by another proceeding which has called forth considerable opposition, namely; the granting of a license to the new C.P.R. Co's. hotel at Banff to sell liquors. Still more recently another order has been issued, allowing the importation of beer of a certain strength, to be sold under certain restrictions. The temperance people naturally look upon these new regulations as a move in the direction of sweeping away the restrictive regulations entirely. It is the thin edge of the wedge, they say, which will apparently soon end in the introduction of a regular liquor license system. Some of the temperance people would prefer a license system to the present regulations, with the partiality shown in their administration. On the other hand those favorable to licence are opposed to the new regulations, on account of the peculiar manner in which are they to be administered, and the additional grounds which they afford for showing favoritism. Again, all classes of the

people are opposed to the new regulations (except the few who may be personally benefitted thereby) on the ground that the changes have been made without consulting the people. It was expected that under the new act for the administration of government in the Territories, the people, through their representatives, would be given some opportunity of pronouncing upon important questions. It appears, however, that the one-man power will still continue to be largely vested in the Governor. General elections were lately held throughout the Territories, under the new act, and it might have been expected that before making the radical changes of such an important nature, an opportunity would have been given the newly-elected representatives to express an opinion thereon. Such, evidently is not Mr. Royal's intention, and he doubtless considers himself more competent to judge of the requirements of the country, after a few weeks' residence therein, than the elected representatives of the people.

The granting of a license to the C.P.R. hotel at Banff, (National Park) is certainly a display of favoritism to say the least. Mr. Royal excuses himself for ordering a license for this hotel on the ground that the promoters have invested a great deal of capital in the hotel, and therefore the least the government could do was to give it a license. The license is to sell wines and beer only. Now this is a very foolish argument. Others have invested capital in the Territories, and why should not they receive a license also? The C.P.R. company invested capital in the hotel, knowing that prohibitory regulations were in force. Further, the amount invested in the hotel is but a trifle for the company, whilst many private persons have invested all they possess. Reasonable excuse may be made for granting a license to the C.P.R. hotel, on the ground that it is located in the National Park, as a summer resort for tourists, and that the government of the park will be administered separately from other portions of the Territories. This line of reasoning might have been adopted with some degree of fairness, but in this case other hotels in the park coming up to a certain standard in providing accommodation, would also have a just claim for a license similar to that granted the C.P.R. hotel.

The more recent order allowing the sale of beer throughout the Territories, under certain restrictions, has no doubt been an

outcome of the granting of a license to the Banff hotel. The popular clamor against the licensing of that hotel, on the ground of favoritism, has induced the governor to issue an order providing for the sale of beer. But whilst the C.P.R. hotel can sell wines and beer of any strength, the licenses which will be issued to certain other hotels will be for the sale of beer only and to contain not more than four per cent. of alcohol. License for the sale of this beer will be granted to hotels having separate bedroom accommodation for not less than twelve persons. The sale of beer will not be allowed between the hours of ten o'clock on Saturday evening and seven o'clock Monday morning; nor to persons under fourteen years of age, and to those of intemperate habits. Upon beer so sold a tax of ten cents per gallon will be collected. This latter is one of the features which is strongly objected to by the people of the Territories. They naturally fail to see why they will be compelled to pay a special tax upon weak beer, which is not levied in other parts of the country. Public meetings have been held throughout the country to discuss the liquor question, and at one of these, held at Calgary, a resolution was passed demanding that the same privileges be granted other parts of the country as had been extended to the C.P.R. hotel at Banff; also asking that the people of the Territories be given control over the liquor question, instead of as now having the liquor regulations administered by the Dominion Government and the Governor appointed by the Government. The temperance people complain that these licenses to sell beer were not asked for by the people, and that the Government has broken faith with the people in issuing these licenses, as it was understood the opinion of the Legislative Assembly would be secured before any changes would be made in the liquor regulations.

Another just cause for complaint against the new Territorial liquor regulations is found in the closing of the local breweries, whilst the importation of the beer is allowed. Formerly light beer was allowed to be sold in the Territories without restriction. Under this system a number of breweries were established at different points in the Territories, for the manufacture of this light beer. In some instances, as in the case of the Moose Jaw brewery, quite a sum of money had been invested in plant. Last fall an order was