

Literary Notices.

THE DEVIL'S CHAIN. By Edward Jenkins, M.P., Author of "Ginx's Baby," &c. Canadian copyright edition.

This powerfully written volume is likely to do a great deal towards opening the eyes of the intellectual classes to the multifarious evils wrought by strong drink. Mr. Jenkins shows how the whole of society is poisoned by the accursed thing. He takes as his text a verse from Ezekiel: "Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence," and points out the source of the violence and the bloody crimes with great faithfulness. He calculates at the same time the fearful waste of money and of other national resource, recognizing the fact that the arguments which touch people's pockets are ever the most pungent.

A BUSINESS CONDUCTED WITH SPIRIT.

The firm of which Mr. Bighorne was the senior partner, was one of the most energetic and successful in the spirit trade. Beginning forty years before, as mixers, diluters, and sweeteners of pure spirit, to create the noxious pleasure called gin, they had gradually pushed their business in every quarter and extended it to the distilling of spirit and manufacture of brandy. They paid nearly a million sterling a year to the excise, thus finding the country on an average about one-eightieth of its revenue—a fact which, on the face of it, entitled them to the position of being its most valuable citizens. That would be the view of an economist; but a thick-headed, though warm-hearted enthusiast, enquiring further into the benefits conferred on society by this great firm, would have boldly said that they were dearly bought. This splendid subscription to revenue represented a manufacture of two millions of gallons per annum of spirits above proof, which would produce I dare not say how many hundreds of thousands of gallons of nutty brandy and cream gin.

Were the enthusiast aforesaid, as he is sure to do, to follow the thousands of hogsheads, or the millions of gorgeously bedizened and sparkling bottles, turned out by this firm, to their des-

tinations by land and sea, and down to the ultimate stomach of that notorious insatiable, "the consumer," he might—might! nay *would* return with a demonstration nothing could shake, that this million gained to the revenue had cost the country in wasted wages, lost means, bankruptcies, shipping disasters, railway accidents, wrecked lives, murders, assaults, crimes unmentionable and innumerable, and general demoralization, with their resulting expenses, as good as ten or twenty millions sterling. In truth, every year Messrs. Bighorne and Company, for their own profit, turned out a product which did as much damage in the world as many a plague or revolution. I state this as a serious proposition based upon facts, and unexaggerated.

That was a fact to which Mr. Bighorne's conscience was alive, but the responsibility for which it denied. That was a fact which the Chancellor of Her Majesty's Exchequer knew, but which he pleaded that, in the peremptory claims of a revenue-raising patriotism, he could not afford to recognize. That was a fact patent to every thoughtful member of the party in Parliament among whom sat Mr. Bighorne, but it never lessened him in their esteem, or choked them at his brilliant entertainments. That was a fact clear to some hundreds of respectable, worthy, aristocratic, highminded, representative gentlemen, who went into the lobby to establish, confirm, and extend Mr. Bighorne's capacity of contributing to the revenue out of his percentages upon drunkenness, death, and crime. But it was plain to them all that not a shadow of blame attached to Mr. Bighorne or to any one of themselves, for people's abuse of an article too easily abused; and they consequently referred the startled reformer to the regenerating influences of Christianity and culture, and stood to Mr. Bighorne as an eminently rich, humane, conservative, and most Christian friend, with a vested interest which it would be both "plundering and blundering" to disturb.

As for Mr. Bighorne, he claimed to be no more chargeable with the consequences of his business than the baker who sells the loaf that chokes a too greedy man.

But we must really enquire, How did this great firm build up, and how does it continue to increase, its enormous business?

The truth is, that the popularity of the "creamy gin" and "nutty brandy" depends in a very small degree on any inherent superiority of those spirits. It is true that there is much in maturing, mixing, coloring, and sweetening the original distillation; but, after all, you come back to the same white dew, condensed and