

The Examiner.

"THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY, WHEN FREEBORN MEN—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC, MAY SPEAK FREE."—EURIPIDES.

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CHARLOTTETOWN, P. E. ISLAND, MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 1849.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

COUNTRY TAVERNS.

MR. EDITOR—

The subject of this communication will doubtless be viewed very differently by different persons, as it may chance to clash with the diversified interests of the people of P. E. Island generally, and perhaps may be subjected to an ordeal very dissonant to the writer's feelings and opinions. Be that as it may—I shall not be deterred from giving publicity, with your approbation, to a few suggestions, involving moral considerations of a most important character. I have reference to the facilities afforded, by the Law as it now stands, to open what are called Taverns throughout the country. That a better state of things can be brought about at a very trifling expense to the country, is undeniable. I would here take the liberty of pressing upon each member of the Legislature before the opening of the next Session, the moral obligation he ought to feel himself under to his constituents to take a scrupulous survey of his District. And in almost every District of the Island what will be the result? As regards the character of public houses, will he not come to the Legislature prepared to say that, either in a moral or physical point of view, the character of nine-tenths of such places is a consummate disgrace to the country and its Legislature? Will not the whole 24 members unite in acknowledging this fact? I beg of them, in the name of every constituency in the Island, that they take the trouble of acquainting themselves with the evil, and I am satisfied that a remedy will soon be found. You, Mr. Editor, being confined to town, seldom have occasion to call at such places; but what would you think, Sir, if, in a tour through the Island, one half of the places you call at for refreshment, you ask first, perhaps, for a glass of Brandy? The answer is, No, Sir. Whiskey? No, Sir. Gin? No, Sir. Wine? None. What have you then? We have Rum, Sir; and when examined you would say, Why, Landlord, you should have said, No, Sir, to the rum question too, for really it has no more the taste of rum than of any other liquid; besides there is neither decanter, tumbler nor pitcher—the house apparently broomless from its erection—you must sit on either a box, stool, or bag of bran, if you sit at all, and can take notes of every thing passing at the four cardinal points through the apertures of this thing called, forsooth, a House of Entertainment. Is your horse eating oats? see the fowls by dozens devouring them. The waiters too—but enough, for in scores of places an attempt at description would baffle human skill. How hungry can you suppose a person to be before he could summon courage to sit down to dinner in such a place? no meat, no bread, bad potatoes, no anything that ought to be. All this may produce a smile—but were you to travel as much as I have done through the Island, a frown would grace your brow. And why is it so? because in a day's ride you pass, very likely, thirty such places; in some localities, a half dozen in the distance of a mile or two, each having their favourite customers, thereby dividing the public patronage into so many parts as renders each unable to get up a House of Entertainment fit for the reception of any but inebriates, which creatures such places are only calculated to create, and which they do by scores. And all this evil arises, first from the manner of granting licences; and secondly, from the price at which they are obtained. As regards the channel through which licences are to be got, one moment's reflection will suffice to reveal its absurdity,—for instance, a new Governor arrives—no restraint being invested in him or his advisers, an application is made for a licence to open a public house—the Governor, if he had the power, and ever so much inclined, is prevented from offering any remarks as to the propriety or impropriety of granting

the licence, from the fact of his being wholly ignorant of the person applying, or his locality. You may say the Council could inform him. I say not; scarcely one of the Council know any thing about the applicant or his location. You will probably say, but the Magistrate's certificate is a guarantee. Is it indeed? I assure you, from ocular demonstration, in four cases out of five, it is no guarantee at all. I feel that this is a delicate point of my subject, but must speak out: certificates are obtained, in many cases, at the expense of sacred oaths. Many of the Magistrates, I am sorry to say, are but too much inclined to have houses of entertainment near them, and are blind to the degradation which, in nine cases out of ten, is inflicted on the neighbourhood in which they are established.

Thus far I had written six months ago, and laid it aside; and perhaps I would not have prosecuted the subject any further, had I not observed in a letter signed X., published in THE EXAMINER, No. 63, the very remedy that I first intended to propose, in order that a stop may be put to the wide-spread evils I complain of, namely, the adoption of the Nova Scotian method of granting licences. It was but lately I acquainted myself with that method. Numerous applications are made for licences in the Province I have mentioned by lazy drones; but the Grand Jury of the County in which the applicant resides, and who are necessarily acquainted with his character and fitness for the vocation, use a discretionary power, and grant no licence for the opening of a public house, unless they are convinced it is needed, and that it would be kept in an orderly manner. By this excellent regulation, the majority of public houses in Nova Scotia are respectable establishments, instead of being dens of iniquity; and if our licence law was remodelled, and made similar to that of Nova Scotia, there would be a far less number of Country Taverns, so called, than are to be found at present in different localities of the Island—in many small settlements three or four quite close to each other,—and those that remained would be houses, no doubt, of a respectable character. Will not humanity rise indignant at the thought of such facilities being allowed to exist for manufacturing drunkards? The competition is such that liquor can be obtained at a moderate price, and often of the worst description: thus a way is legalized for the demoralization of one half of the rising generation. I do trust that the Legislature will do something at its next Session to ameliorate the abominable evil. Well, you say, that the Treasury must be replenished year by year, and that by limiting the number of public houses, there would be a falling off in the revenue. No such fear need be entertained for one moment. I am confident that if but one public house were allowed to each settlement, a very marked improvement in the style of entertainment offered to the public, would be the result; besides, one tavern well kept, could afford to pay as large a licence duty as five or six put together, when they are badly and poorly kept. As you have the means of fully acquainting yourself with the Nova Scotia Licence Act, I need do no more than refer you to it.

In conclusion, I beg to say that it was intimated to me lately by a very respectable man, that, in his opinion, the licencing of Stores was an evil of which the Government does not seem to be aware. The most of such licences are much abused, from the fact of the store-keepers selling in smaller quantities than a quart, and allowing the buyers to drink in the stores; besides, liquor being obtained cheaper that way than at the tavern, two or three club together—purchase a quart, and swill it down in a hurry for fear of detection, and thus prepared for any thing, tumble into the tavern drunk—when all manner of irregularities are practised, to the eternal disgrace of the community and themselves.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

F. T. K.

[Our correspondent will perceive that we have taken

some liberties with his communication, but we trust he will likewise discover that we did so with a view to its improvement. It is disagreeable to have to reject a communication, which may contain useful hints, on account of irregularities of style, and errors incidental to haste in composition, or to the want of a due regard to grammatical rules. But we beg to remark that it is not the duty of an editor to correct the MSS. of others—to prune redundancies and supply omissions: every writer for the press should remember, that the only true passport to an editor's favour is, clean and correct composition.—As regards the condition of the country taverns, we doubt much that legislation could ever effect any improvement in them. The only remedy, we think, for those that are badly and irregularly kept, is to let the travelling public discountenance and shun them. Nova Scotia is cited: in many a weary day's journey through the eastern and western sections of that Province we failed to discover many of those model inns which the Licence Act there is supposed to encourage: there are many very bad ones as well as good; and such will always be the case, especially so in poor and scattered settlements. If it were not for making invidious distinctions, we could name more than a score of public houses in the eastern and western divisions of the Island, that are well and comfortably provided, considering the circumstances of the country, whilst we would be at a loss to name as many of an opposite character. If the latter abound, as our correspondent believes, public opinion, aided by the Temperance reformation, will be the best corrective.—Ed. Ex.]

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EXAMINER.

SIR;

Are you aware that Mr. D. McLean lately called a public meeting of his New London Electors for the purpose of explaining to them the principles of his Land Purchase Bill, introduced Last Session, and ordered to be printed, and that his call was responded to by about a dozen individuals? Such is the fact. I am well informed that Duncan was so much disgusted with the indifference or apathy of his neighbouring constituents, that he was more than uncommonly unhappy in his oratorical displays. This failure must, I suppose, account for the fact, that no notice of the meeting found its way into the newspapers. Never having much admired Mr. McLean's style of public speaking, I did not feel inclined for travelling to New London, in cold weather, in order to hear his speech on the occasion referred to; but as you must have seen or heard read the Bill about which he brags so much, a notice of it in the Examiner would, I am sure, be acceptable to the country generally, and particularly to

AN ELECTOR OF THE FIRST DISTRICT.

Brackley Point, January 13, 1849.

[We have heard the Bill read at the Clerk's Table in the House of Assembly. In framing the Bill, Mr. Maclean borrowed, we believe, an idea from his colleague (Mr. Coles), and spoiled it. When we have leisure we shall endeavour to satisfy the curiosity of an "Elector," on the subject of it.—Ed. Ex.]

MR. EDITOR—

Can you inform the public how it is that the pumps of Charlottetown are so woefully out of repair that it is with great difficulty a pail of water can be obtained from many of them? Is the contractor not paid for attending to his business in this respect? Surely our townfolk pay a sufficiently high tax to entitle them, at any time, to a good supply of

COLD WATER.

January 13.

[We know not how to account for the inefficient state of the Pumps—it certainly cannot be owing to want of funds. Besides the inconvenience which must now be felt, damaged Pumps would be a great evil in the event of a fire taking place.—Ed. Ex.]