

In No. 2 letter to the Governor, dated 29th April, 1891, Mr. Moss says: "I have the honour to inform your Excellency that I find universal agreement on my arrival here as to the excellent working of the liquor law passed on the 24th December last. The sobriety of the island cannot be questioned, and the impartiality and effectiveness of Mr. Garnier's administration of the law have gained the confidence of the people. I have informed that gentleman of the thanks which your Excellency desired me to convey to him. I find that only four bottles of liquor of all kinds have been issued to natives since the law has been in force (15th January)."

In letter No. 7 to the Governor, dated 22nd July, 1891, Mr. Moss says: "The liquor law continues satisfactory in its operation, and is accepted now on every side." "An attempt was made to establish a club in which each member should have a cupboard to keep his own liquor, but none to be sold on the premises. This would have been a direct evasion of the liquor law, and on my pointing this out the attempt was abandoned. The club is now in existence, but no intoxicating liquor is kept on the premises."

In a letter to the Governor, dated 13th November, 1891, Mr. Moss states: "The liquor law continues to work well in preventing the supply of imported liquor to the natives. With a few exceptions the foreign residents have always been temperate drinkers. Since my last despatch the Licensing Officer has prosecuted one trader—a European—for selling two bottles of spirits to another European who had not previously obtained a permit to buy. Judge (Tepou-o-te Rang) decided that there was ample evidence to justify the prosecution, but not enough for conviction."

In his letter to the foreign residents, refusing to allow liquor to be kept in the club, Mr. Moss says, under date 19th November, 1891, "You are, no doubt, also aware that my published instructions enjoin me to regard the present law as experimental only, and that if it fail, total prohibition must be substituted."

Mr. Moss says, under date 31st May, 1892, in a letter to the Governor: "The liquor law continues to work satisfactorily, and the drunkenness prevalent eighteen months ago has quite disappeared. The native consumption is confined to what they call beer, manufactured secretly from the abundant oranges, and for which manufacture they are fined, when detected."

What then has been the effect of this law? to stop the importation of strong drink? By no means; but it has provided an easy method of raising revenue for the Government. Take first of all the imports of intoxicating liquor into the Cook Islands, 1st July to 30th November, 1891 (five months)—spirits, \$425 = £85; wines, \$186 = £37 4s.; beer, \$88 = £17 12s. (at 4s. to the dollar): total, £139 16s.

Very little was sold between the 15th January and 1st July, for Mr. Moss wrote to the Governor of New Zealand, under date 29th April, 1891, "I find that only four bottles of liquor of all kinds have been issued to natives since the law has been in force (15th January)"; and also wrote on the 22nd of July, "The liquor law continues satisfactory in its operation."

1st July, 1891 to 30th June, 1892 (\$5 to the £1.):—Spirits, \$1,269.53 = £253 18s. 1d.; wines, \$301.36 = £60 5s. 5½d.; beer, \$713.10 = £142 12s. 4d.: total, £456 15s. 10½d.

1st January, 1892 to 31st December, 1892: Spirits, £324; wines, £25; beer, £153; total, £502.

1st January, 1893 to 31st December, 1893 (during the first six months of this year the dollar was reckoned at 4s.; during the last six months at 3s.): Spirits, total for the year, £410; wines, total for the year, £54; beer, total for the year, £89: Total, £553.

1st January, 1894 to 31st December, 1894: Spirits, \$3,545 = £531 15s.; wines, \$394 = £59 2s.; beer, \$266 = £39 18s.; (at 3s. to the dollar): total, £630 15s.

1st January, 1895 to 31st December, 1895: Spirits, £481; wines, £77; beer, £27: total £585.

1st January, 1896 to 31st December, 1896: Spirits, £552; wines, £67; beer, £96: total, 715.

Fees levied on Permits for Liquor from 1st July, 1891, to 30th June, 1892: 287 doz. bottles beer at 30 cts. per doz., \$86.12; 73½ doz. wine at 60 cts. per doz., \$44.25; 394½ doz. spirits at \$3 per doz., \$1,184.61: total, \$1,314.98 at 4s. = £262 19s. 3½d.

1st July, 1892, to 30th June, 1893 (six months at 4s.): 166½ doz. beer at 30 cts., \$50 = £5; 68½ doz. wine at 60 cts., \$41 = £4 2s. 4½d.; 535½ doz. spirits at \$5, \$1,607.94 = £160 15s. 10½d.: total, £169 18s. 3½d. (six months at 3s.), beer, £3 15s.; wine, £3 1s. 9½d.; spirits, £120 11s. 10½d.: total, £127 8s. 8½d.

1st July, 1893, to 30th June, 1894: Amounts of beer, wine, and spirits not separately stated, total fees, at 3s. to the dollar on \$1,665.20 = £249 15s. 7d.

There is difficulty in comparing the fees with the amount of liquor imported. In the imports, the returns run from January to December; in the fees, from 1st July to 30th June of each year. I have not obtained the returns of fees levied for July–June, 1895, 1896, and 1897 yet. As there is a gradual increase apparent in the imports of liquor, it is evident that there will be a gradual increase in the fees: 1st July, 1894, to 30th June, 1895 = £368 4s. 5d.; 1st July, 1895, to 30th June, 1896 = £391 10s. 6d.

In 1892 the imports of intoxicating liquors exceeded the imports of 1891 by £45 4s. 1½d. The imports of 1893 exceeded those of 1892 by £51. The imports of 1894 exceeded those of 1893 by £77 15s. In 1895 there was a decrease, the imports being £45 15s. less than 1894, though £32 more than those of 1893. In 1896 again there was a considerable increase over 1895, not less than £130. The worst feature of the case is that there has been a continuous increase in the use of ardent spirits, except in 1895, when £50 worth less spirits were imported than in 1894. But in 1892 more spirits were consumed than in 1891; in 1893, than in 1892; in 1894, than in 1893; and in 1896, than in 1895.

As regards the fees: The fees increased in 1892–93 more than £30 above 1891–92, 1893–94; on the other hand was £50 less than 1892–93; 1894–95 was more than £70 in excess of 1893–94; and 1895–96 was £23 6s. 1d. in excess of 1894–95.

How, then, can the Act be said to have succeeded, when, according to the official statistics, there has been a continual increase in the imports and the fees levied on intoxicating liquors. My personal opinion is that the liquor traffic should be taken out of the control of the natives. When the present law was proposed I opposed it; though, of course, I had no vote at the meeting at Ngatangia on the 10th January, 1891. Excellent in intention, the law has been defective in execution,—

(a.) Permits for the sale of liquor have been sold by persons appointed by the chiefs, 20 cents. being charged for a permit. At the present time that practice has been stopped, and the Arikis only can issue permits, as the law directs; the other practice being a violation of the law.

(b.) Five or six names, or even more, are sometimes written on a single permit. This I hear to be the case. There is an attempt to alter this, made lately by Mr. Moss, and submitted to the Council. The permits are to have a stamp affixed, and only one name can be entered on a permit. The person who issues the permits is to be paid a fixed salary, and to be fined heavily if he takes money for the issue of permits from any one else.

(c.) A bottle of spirits is too much of a temptation for a native. He cannot rest until he has finished the bottle.

(d.) The more liquor sold, the greater is the revenue of the Rarotongan Council.

(e.) Nowhere else is it the case, I believe, that the same duties, 6 per cent., are levied on intoxicating liquors as well as on articles of food. There is, of course, the fee to add; but even then liquor is much too cheap, and very heavy duties should be put upon it in order to restrict the traffic.

The present system has failed, and something else should be tried. Heavy duties should be put on, smugglers and illicit-drink sellers severely punished; the police should arrest and punish all drunkards.

If prohibition of the liquor traffic is to be the law here, let it be carried out properly, and an officer, a European, appointed to examine cargo, &c., on the arrival of vessels. Under native officers I do not think that prohibition could be effectively enforced, and some system like the Gothenburg system, with a total abstainer in charge of the house, should be given a trial.

Rarotonga, 30th December, 1897.

Sir James Prendergast, Chief Justice of New Zealand.

I remain, &c.,

JOHN J. K. HUTCHIN.