

## THE LIQUOR QUESTION.

Mr. J. R. HAMILTON: I should like to know how long liquor had been available in Samoa up to the time it was prohibited.

Rev. Mr. SIBREE: There is no one here old enough to say.

Mr. HAMILTON: How long is it that licenses have been issued to sell liquor in Samoa?

Mr. NELSON: As far back as I can remember.

Hon. Sir JAMES ALLEN: This and the labour question are probably the two questions you are most concerned with at the present time. I can give you a perfectly straight and uncompromising answer with regard to liquor. The matter was considered by the National Government before it was dissolved, and it resolved that prohibition ought to prevail amongst the whites if it is to prevail amongst the Natives in Samoa. That was subsequently confirmed by the Reform Government, of which the Right Hon. Mr. Massey is the leader. Now I am not going away from here without trying to induce you to see that the New Zealand Government acted rightly. The Peace Treaty has embodied in it the Covenant of the League of Nations, and in Article 22 there are these words: "To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them, and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization, and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant." The article goes on to say that these islands are to be under the Mandatory of certain nations contiguous to them; and, as you know, Samoa has been allotted to us. The article says, "There are territories, such as South-west Africa and certain of the South Pacific islands, which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilization, or their geographical contiguity to the territory of the Mandatory, and other circumstances, can be best administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions of its territory, subject to the safeguards above mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population." Now, what are "the safeguards above mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population"? "The prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, the arms traffic, and the liquor traffic. . . . In every case of mandate, the Mandatory shall render to the Council an annual report in reference to the territory committed to its charge. . . . The degrees of authority, control, or administration to be exercised by the Mandatory shall, if not previously agreed upon by the members of the League, be explicitly defined in each case by the Council. . . . A permanent Commission shall be constituted to receive and examine the annual reports of the Mandatories and to advise the Council on all matters relating to the observance of the mandates." Those are the instructions to New Zealand as embodied in the Covenant of the League of Nations. Under this Mandatory we are taking over these islands and the 30,000 Samoans who live here. They must be prohibited from the supply of liquor. Gentlemen, I do not see how it is possible to prevent liquor reaching these Natives if we allow it to come into the country for the use of the whites. We have had experience in our own islands—in the Cook Group—and we know that the liquor does reach them. I know that the liquor reaches them in Samoa. It would not be consistent with our trust, therefore, if we did not do all that we possibly could to prevent liquor reaching the Samoan Native. There is another reason why I think the policy is sound. You are living here, more or less a handful of whites among some thirty thousand Samoans—a proud, dignified race. If we are to establish at the commencement of our Civil administration a discrimination between white and Native, what is it going to lead to? I see only one conclusion that we can come to—that ultimately the Samoan will say, "Why should I be treated in respect of this liquor question in a different way from the whites? Am I any worse than the whites? Am I not to be trusted as well as the whites?" The discrimination would undoubtedly lead to difficulties. Those difficulties the Government of New Zealand must do all they can to avoid; and that is another reason why this step has been taken. Now, gentlemen, you know my answer. We have prohibited the importation of liquor into Samoa. We have not yet taken the final step, stopping its consumption. Provision will be made for liquor to be obtained for medicinal purposes where the doctor orders it. Provision will be made for its being obtained for sacramental purposes, and for industrial purposes if they require it, as well as scientific purposes. That, I think, answers a good deal of what you state in this article in your pamphlet with regard to the necessity for liquor in a climate such as this is. Any way, there is the decision. Now, I am going to ask you this, as white men like myself: I am not a total abstainer, but I give you the lead and I ask you to follow. We whites have seen something of the sacrifices that have been made during the last five years by men who have gone to fight for our freedom at the front. A huge sacrifice has been made. What have we done who stayed at home? We may have sacrificed some of our property, some of our means. It is paltry as compared with what some of the men sacrificed who went to the front. Now we have an opportunity to do something by way of sacrifice—give up some little luxury and pleasure to help the free and dignified race of Samoans. Will you gentlemen, therefore, join in agreeing to what the Government have done? I understand that you do not like to be deprived of your freedom; nor do I. At the same time, it may go a long way to raise you in your own estimation. I believe it will go a long way to raise you in the estimation of the Samoan Natives—it certainly will in the estimation of New Zealand—if you make the sacrifice willingly. Give up that which, after all, is only a luxury to you—because if you require it for medicinal purposes you will get it; give up this luxury, and I venture to say that in the years to come you will rejoice that you have made one sacrifice, at any rate, in the interests of a great people.