

## TEMPERANCE AND PROHIBITION

Though distillation of spirits has for centuries been an unknown industry in Iceland, large quantities of alcoholic beverages have been imported from abroad, especially the so-called Danish Brandy, the use of which so increased in course of time that a little after the middle of the nineteenth century the annual per capita consumption amounted to about 6 litres (a 50 per cent. alcohol), while that of wines did not exceed 0.7 of a litre.

A few total abstinence societies were formed here in the early fifties, but the salutary influence exerted by them was very slight indeed; and a powerful agitation in favour of temperance was not begun till 1884 when the International Order of Good Templars (I. O. G. T.) was introduced in Iceland. In the years immediately following, interest in temperance quickly spread over the country; a number of lodges sprang up, and a Grand Lodge was established in 1886; in 1897 there were 2000 good templars in the country; in 1907 their number had risen to 6700, which corresponds to rather more than 8 per cent. of the then population. The society has powerfully influenced drink legislation in Iceland and since 1893 it enjoys a State grant to promote temperance.

With the exception of a tax on all imported wines and spirits which was imposed in 1872 and often since made subject to repeated and heavy increases, little was done by the legislature to encourage the efforts for the sobriety of the people. But in 1888 a law was passed, according to which special permission had to be obtained to sell intoxicants for consumption on the premises. Licences (valid for 5 years at most) were granted by the government; but no application was considered unless supported by the local electorate and approved, in towns, by the town council and, in rural districts, by the parish and district councils. In 1899 further restrictions were imposed, and the granting of licences to retail alcoholic drinks was made subject to the decision of the local authorities (see above).

These legislative measures and the work done by the Good Templar Lodges effected a great improvement; the number of retail and inn-keepers' licences diminished steadily, and about 1907 many districts were quite 'dry'.

Just after the commencement of the present century the I.O.G.T. began to devote its efforts to securing total prohibition of the importa-