

15TH DECEMBER, 1904.

PRESENT:—

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR, SIR MATTHEW NATHAN, K.C.M.G.

HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR-GENERAL VILLIERS-HATTON, C.B. (General Officer Commanding the Troops).

Hon. Mr. F. H. MAY, C.M.G. (Colonial Secretary).

Hon. Mr. L. A. M. JOHNSTON (Colonial Treasurer).

Hon. Mr. A. W. BREWIN (Registrar-General).

Hon. Mr. P. N. H. JONES (Director of Public Works).

Hon. Captain L. A. W. BARNES-LAWRENCE, R.N. (Harbour Master).

Hon. Sir C. P. CHATER, KT., C.M.G.

Hon. Dr. HO KAI, M.B., C.M., C.M.G.

Hon. Mr. WEI YUK.

Hon. Mr. R. SHEWAN.

Hon. Mr. W. J. GRESSON.

Hon. Mr. GERSHOM STEWART.

Mr. S. B. C. ROSS (Clerk of Councils).

MINUTES.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

FINANCIAL MINUTES.

The Hon. COLONIAL SECRETARY—Sir, I have the honour to lay on the table Financial Minutes Nos, 54, 55 and 56, and move that they be referred to the Finance Committee.

The Hon. COLONIAL TREASURER—I beg to second the motion.

The motion was carried.

The Hon. COLONIAL SECRETARY—Sir, I beg to bring up the report of the Finance Committee, No. 13, and move its adoption.

The Hon. COLONIAL TREASURER—I beg to second the motion.

The motion was carried.

ALCOHOLIC LIQUORS.

The Hon. COLONIAL SECRETARY—Sir, I have the honour to lay on the table a paper being a report by Professor Thorpe, F.R.S. on his examination of samples of cheap spirits purchased in Hongkong. The origin of this report, Sir, is that in 1898 a Commission was appointed here to enquire into the question of alcoholic liquors, their soundness and otherwise. It was reported, among other things, as various analyses have shown, that these cheap liquors did not contain deleterious substances, and contained less fusel oil than genuine spirits. The report went on to say the evidence collected here showed that drunkenness was due rather to the quantity than to the quality of the liquor consumed. In spite of that report

questions have from time to time arisen as to the quality of the liquor sold in public houses. To put the matter entirely at rest five samples of the cheapest quality of liquor sold in public houses frequented by soldiers, sailors, and people of that class, in the Colony were obtained and sent home with the request that they might be analysed by the highest analytical authorities in the United Kingdom. This report is the result of that analysis and members will see that it entirely confirms previous analyses made by the Government Analyst of this Colony.

The report by Professor T. E. Thorpe, F.R.S., was dated Government Laboratory, 26th September, 1904. It read as follows:—

The five samples of spirits forwarded by the Under Secretary for the Colonies have been examined and the following are the results of the analyses:—

Mark—Govt. Laby. No.:—	A M 127	B M 128	C M 129	D M 130	E M 131
Colour	Light	Light	Sherry	Park	Light
	Sherry	Sherry		Sherry	Sherry
Flavour	Slight	Slight	Harsh	Slight	Very slight
	Whisky	Whisky	Spirit	Brandy	Whisky
Strength	22.8	15.7	17.2	22.7	15.4
	u.p.	u.p.	u.p.	u.p.	u.p.
Percentages:—	Grams. per 100 c. c. at <i>proof</i> strength.				
Acidity—Total	0.087	0.089	0.014	0.014	0.021
Volatile	0.029	0.035	0.006	0.008	0.004
Furfural	0.0009	0.0007	Nil.	Nil.	Trace.
Aldehydes	0.0010	0.0012	Trace.	Trace.	Trace.
Esters ("Compound Ethers,") ...	0.0501	0.0626	0.0086	0.0045	0.0021
Higher Alcohols	0.1290	0.1174	0.0117	0.0129	0.0190
Solid matter in solution	0.304	0.330	0.169
Ash	0.028	0.020	0.020

From a consideration of these results we are of opinion that samples A and B consist of "patent still" or "silent" spirit with an admixture of genuine "pot still" whisky for the purpose of imparting the genuine whisky flavour to the mixture. These samples are very similar to what is usually sold in "public houses" in this country as whisky.

The whisky would not, of course, be considered of good quality from a commercial point of view, but the total percentages of "fusel oil impurities," and more especially the proportions of furfural and aldehydes present in these samples, are considerably less than are generally found in genuine Scotch and Irish "pot still" whiskies of high commercial quality.

Samples C, D, and E are wholly, or almost wholly, composed of "patent" or "silent" spirit diluted, coloured and flavoured to imitate brandy and whisky.

The "silent" spirit used in concocting these mixtures was highly rectified; and, as will be seen from the results of the analyses, the "fusel oil impurities" in the "whisky" and "brandy" as sold are very low.

Two of the samples, C and E, are coloured with caramel only, the colouring matter in the other three samples containing also traces of an aniline dye, but both colouring and flavouring matters are used in very minute quantities, and there is no evidence of the presence of any substance not usually found in spirituous drinks of this kind.

These "brandies" and "whiskies" cannot, therefore, be considered as in any way of a specially deleterious character; and apart from the quantities consumed, are at least as wholesome as spirits of the same quality sold in this country by publicans and other licensed traders.

QUESTIONS.

The Hon. Mr. SHEWAN asked the following questions, standing in his name:—(1.) With regard to Buoys and Lights, will the Government take into consideration the advisability of having the present fairway marked at night by Automatic Light Buoys? (2.) Are the present two small white lights in the Capsuimun Pass adequate? (3.) If not, what steps have the Government taken to replace them by better?

The Hon. HARBOUR MASTER—Your Excellency,—The replies to the three questions put by the Hon. Member of the Chamber of Commerce are taken in order as follows:—(1) Yes. (2) No. (3) A red light similar to that displayed by the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs at Amhurst Point has been ordered for Ma Wan Island.

ADJOURNMENT.

H. E. the GOVERNOR—The Council Meeting stands adjourned till after the conclusion of the meeting of the Finance Committee.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Finance Committee was then held, the Hon. Colonial Secretary presiding.

Financial Minute No. 54. — H.E. the Governor recommended the Council to vote a sum of \$500 in aid of the vote Botanical and Afforestation Department, Other Charges, for Tree Planting.

The Hon. COLONIAL SECRETARY — This excess expenditure is due to the planting of trees and the removal of a nursery at Kowloon to make room for a building site.

The vote was agreed to.

Financial Minute No. 55. — H.E. the Governor recommended the Council to vote a sum of \$1,000 in aid of the vote Miscellaneous Services for Coals for Offices.

The Hon. COLONIAL SECRETARY—This vote does not show any real excess in expenditure. The excess is over the approved estimates, but the estimates are under what they ought to have been, as there was a similar excess last year.

The vote was agreed to.

Financial Minute No. 56. — H.E. the Governor recommended the Council to vote a further sum of \$300 in aid of the vote Fire Brigade, Other Charges, for Repairs to Engines, Hose, &c., and Gratuities.

The Hon. COLONIAL SECRETARY—This excess was due to the long period of intermittent water supply, and extra work by fire-engines.

The meeting of the Finance Committee was then adjourned; and the Council Meeting was resumed, H.E. the Governor taking the chair.

The Hon. COLONIAL SECRETARY—Sir, I have the honour to report that at the meeting just held of the Finance Committee the following votes, namely Financial Minutes Nos. 54, 55 and 56, were considered by the Finance Committee and unanimously adopted. I beg therefore, Sir, to move that the Council do now approve of the recommendations of the Finance Committee.

The Hon. COLONIAL TREASURER—I beg to second the motion.

The motion was carried.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Council adjourned *sine die*.