

Defendants were entitled to a non-suit on the grounds that the Customs Department was responsible, if anybody was, and there was no evidence to show that the defendants were even in possession of the goods. On the merits of the case, the defendants were also entitled to judgment. This was entered accordingly, with costs £1 1s.

WHISKY AS MEDICINE.

The "Idler" Magazine says that the universal remedy for the rattlesnake's bite is unlimited whisky. The pioneer bitten by a snake usually has the remedy at hand, but if the jar happens to be empty he mounts his horse and gallops, not to the doctor, but to the tavern, and readily fills himself up with the juice at first cheers and then inebriates. Next morning he merely suffers from headache, and is ready to encounter another snake. This gives point to that jest about the cowboy who had come east to Maine, the prohibition state in which whisky is allowed to be used only as medicine. The cowboy wandered round, begging passers-by to tell him where he could find a snake. "In heaven's name," said one, "what do you want a snake for?" "I want it to bite me so that I can get a drink of whisky," was the reply.

THE NECK OF A BOTTLE.

The neck of a bottle sticking out of a parcel was the cause of a Police Court case last Friday. On that day in the local court a man named Frederick Skeen was charged with having procured intoxicating liquor for a prohibited person named Arthur McKeown. The evidence for the prosecution was that McKeown was found sitting in a doorway in Ponsonby Road with some parcels. The neck of a bottle of beer sticking out of one of them caught the arresting constable's eye. The defence was that Skeen did not know McKeown was a "prohib." and that he (Skeen) owned the beer. The magistrate dismissed the case, remarking that he had to be certain on the point of Skeen's knowledge of McKeown's prohibited state.

GIVEN A CHANCE.

Last Friday, in the Supreme Court, William Oldham, lately employed as commercial traveller for Messrs Heather, Rorton and Co., appeared before Mr Jus-

tice Edwards for sentence on a charge of having misappropriated about £102, the property of his employers. His Honor said that in view of the restitution of the money, the excellent character given to the accused by several witnesses, and the recommendation for leniency given by the employers, he would give the accused a chance to retrieve his character. Accused was convicted and ordered to come up for sentence if called on. His future conduct would decide whether he would be brought up for sentence or not. If his conduct were not good he would be brought up for sentence for this offence.

UNCLE SAM AND SCOTCH WHISKY.

A correspondent of the "Standard" states that about a year ago the United States Agricultural Department established a Bureau of Chemistry for the purpose of investigation and analysing food products. For some years previous regulations had been on the Statute Books relative to the purity of foods and liquors imported into the country, but had never been strictly enforced, owing to the difficulty arising from inability to fix standards; and when the Bureau of Chemistry was organised one of the first articles to receive attention was Scotch whisky. This was primarily owing to the fact that the demand for Scotch whisky in the States was growing very rapidly, and unscrupulous dealers were placing upon the market so-called Scotch whisky, which was in reality an American concoction, into which little or no Scotch whisky entered; in some instances "plain spirits, colouring matter, Scotch whisky essence, and bead oil made up the compound sold, and was, unfortunately for the public, in many instances used to re-fill the bottles of well-known brands of imported Scotch. This practice was really the cause of the investigation by Dr. Wiley, chief of the bureau. When his investigations began a number of statements concerning Scotch whisky, alleged to have been made by him, appeared and caused some controversy. However, Dr. Wiley went into the matter thoroughly, and as a result of his investigations in the United States and after his recent trip to Scotland he is satisfied that the Scotch whisky sent over by the prominent distillers is of the very best quality. In consequence of the agitation some dealers who had been manufacturing so-called Scotch whisky in the States were compelled to purchase from Scotland.

INIQUITY, IMBECILITY, AND SIR WILFRID LAWSON.

Under the above heading the "Licensing Victualers Gazette" has the following article on the drink question:—Whether Sir Wilfrid Lawson is marching alone or is followed by the noble army of reformers that he believes himself to be leading; whether he is progressing in a direct line to his goal or is moving in a circle, are points upon which the Apostle of Abolition and the people of this country are good-naturedly agreed to differ. He, at least, is transparently sincere; he is logical to his own satisfaction, and his faith in himself and his distrust of the people remains unshaken and unchangeable. He doesn't trust the drink shop, he doesn't trust the public, but his trust in himself is sufficient to enable him to make a bold stand against common-sense, simple justice, and practical reform. The times have swept past him, but he still believes himself to be in the van; intolerance has given place to broad and enlightened methods of progress, but he will not surrender the thumb-screw and the block; in an age of dwindling prejudice he is as luridly fanatical as he was half a century ago. He would apply Crimean methods to modern warfare; he has no idea of other cures for disorders than the letting of blood. But all the time his sincerity is beyond suspicion. All the world may fear that it is wrong, but Sir Wilfrid Lawson is absolutely convinced of his own infallibility. Fifty years ago he banged an unoffending pulpit with an eloquent fist and cried, "National prohibition is the one and only cure for the curse of drink." He was repeating himself, as glibly, as eloquently, and as logically at Leeds this week as he ever did in the long and strenuous course of his unreasonable, illogical, and ineffectual campaign.

Half a century has not sufficed to teach Sir Wilfrid that with regard to this subject of licensing he has, all along, had hold of what children call the mucky end of the stick. He is quite correct in his contention that a license is granted for the public good and that its renewal is determined by public considerations. When a locality has assumed such proportions in the way of population that the issue of a license is justified, the license is, or supposed to be, granted; and if the neighbourhood increases other licenses may be added to keep pace with the demand. Should such public considerations as the misuse of the privilege

by the misconduct of the license-holders be proved, the renewal may be refused, or should the locality lose its inhabitants and the population dwindle, the license will naturally fall into abeyance for want of custom. And unless these considerations arise, the man who has sunk his capital in a public-house and has striven to preserve a clean record and make a decent if laborious living out of his business, has justice and precedent to support his contention that he should not be disturbed simply because his presence is hurtful to the conscience of Sir Wilfrid Lawson or any other estimable but wrong-headed person. Because Sir Wilfrid cannot have him shifted by desire he asks, "Are we to sit down under such a miscarriage of justice—under such a mixture of iniquity and imbecility?" He himself answers "No," but Parliament and the country have said "Yes," and until British justice can be proved iniquitous and fair play is shown to be imbecile, the "Ayes" will continue to have it.

What the Lawsonites refuse to acknowledge is that the people do not consume liquor in order to provide the licensed victuallers with the wherewithal to pay their rent and taxes, but that the publicans are the creation of a public demand for their services. People in Sir Wilfrid's social and financial position stock their cellars without having recourse to the local hostel—they patronise lordly wine merchants or attend the sales of their deceased friends' liquid effects, or even import their potatoes in bulk from Epernay or Rheims. But their requirements, which we hold in respect, are not more important than those of the little tradesman, the mechanic, or the agricultural labourer, who sends for his beer as he requires it, and with such limitations as to quality as his means permit him to pay for. This class of person does not belong to the Reform Club or the Wellington, nor does it pay Carlton or Hotel Ritz prices when it would quench a random thirst, but the thirst is none the less theirs by virtue of honest labour and healthy living, and their right to quench it is indisputable. Sir Wilfrid and his adherents can only cope with the facts either by opening Reform Clubs in the rural districts or enabling the working classes to procure their beer by the barrel—to deny them the privilege of getting a drink because they hesitate to pledge their credit to the extent of a 36-gallon cask is unreasonable. To tell the general public that they must either bend

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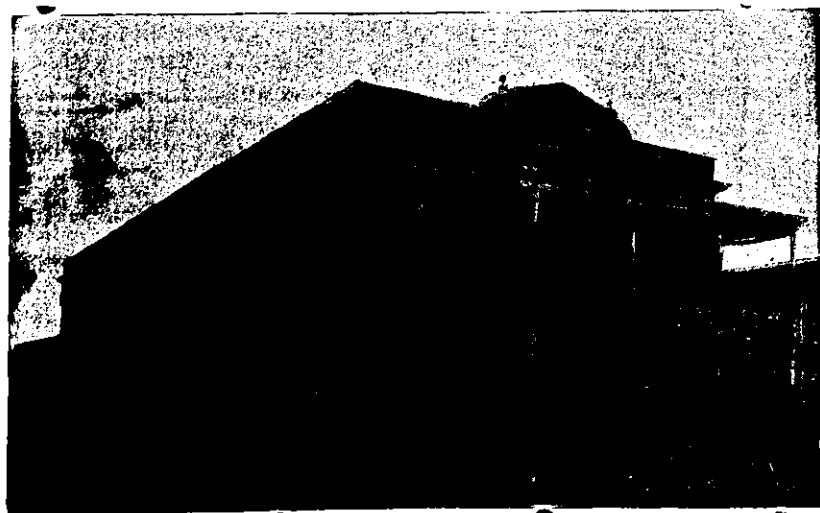
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