

much; for it would brighten up and dispel the monotony of village life, and the mechanical manufacture of lethargic village toppers would soon die out. In the right sort of situation—the green, or the outskirts of the village street—and with the right sort of licensee, the village inn could easily develop into one of the most charming features of English rural life.

There is no doubt of the practicability of this much-to-be-desired transformation of the public-house. There is no doubt, either, of the popularity which would await it; Continental experience, and initial experiments at home, alike demonstrate this. All that is wanted to start the transformation is the awakening of public interest, the diversion of misplaced and miscalled "temperance" sentiment, a broader view on licensing benches, the removal of a few useless restrictions from the statute-book, a change in the methods and extent of taxation, and an end of confiscatory attacks upon the trade to whose enterprise the carrying out of the improvements will necessarily be entrusted. For we must not forget that the transformation would involve the owners of public-houses in some capital outlay, and though the actual work of improvement must be left to voluntary enterprise, there is this that the State can do: it can ease the fiscal burden for the purpose of encouraging enterprise and enabling the needed capital to be raised, and it can overhaul, and largely eliminate from the statute-book the restrictions which in times past it has imposed, and which, with the change in the character of the tavern, will become more than ever unnecessary and harmful. So much, indeed, will be only an act of reparation which the State owes to the public and the publican for its past foolishness; but in doing this rather negative work the State will, for the first time in its licensing history, be really taking a part in true temperance reform.

**ALLEGATIONS AGAINST HOTEL-KEEPERS.**

**CATERING FOR WOMEN.**

A great storm was raised at a recent gathering of "Temperance Advocates" against certain hotels providing facilities to encourage women to drink, and amendments were demanded to the licensing laws to prevent this state of affairs to continue. Mrs Mason, a member of a deputation to city members of Parliament, strongly criticised what she described as the encouragement some licensed victuallers extended to induce women to drink in their hotels. She related an instance that came under her own observation. A sick child was in a home that she visited in the suburbs one evening. The doctor had ordered spirits for the child. A young girl was sent for these spirits to a hotel, and Mrs Mason accompanied her. Not liking the idea of the girl going into the hotel, Mrs Mason went into the house herself, and was astounded when she was shown into a large room with numerous tables. All the tables were occupied by women, who were drinking. Since then she had been told that the dining-room of the hotel was fitted up comfortably in the evenings for the purpose of encouraging women to drink there. Old and young women were sitting in the hotel when she paid the visit, and she put in a strong plea on behalf of womanhood, and urged that measures should be taken to prevent publicans from catering for the women in the way she had described.

Mr A. E. Glover, M.P., said he regretted exceedingly to hear the remarks made by Mrs Mason. He thought that the name of the publican and the hotel should be given. The matter was one that called for investigations.

On the name of the publican and the hotel being given, Mr Glover said that as an accusation had been made the publican must have the chance to defend himself, and he promised to inquire into the matter.

Mr A. Harris, M.P., said he had not the slightest idea that such a state of things existed, and was very

pleased that Mrs Mason had made the matter public.

It was further stated that there were other hotels equally bad.

Mr J. S. Dickson, M.P., remarked that such a condition of affairs should not be tolerated.

Possibly the details given above may be an exaggeration of the true facts, and doubtless the hotelkeeper against whom the chief complaint was lodged has some explanation to offer that may minimise what is unquestionably a regrettable state of affairs. We are perfectly aware that there is no section of the public who are so unfairly criticised and harassed as are the licensed victuallers; but at the same time we must reluctantly admit that if individual hotelkeepers carry on a business that is liable to create a public scandal they are exposing the whole Trade to serious injury. It therefore behoves members of the licensed trade collectively to take such steps as will prevent moderate-minded people being scandalised by a state of things that, to say the least, is not in the best interests of licensed victuallers as a whole. Some twelve or eighteen months ago the subject of serving women in public houses was ventilated before the Licensing Bench, and at the time the Committee hinted that the practice was one they looked upon with disfavour, and trusted the licensed victuallers would not encourage women to drink on their premises. On behalf of one of the leading wholesale firms, it was stated at the time that they strongly discountenanced the practice of serving women, and many hotelkeepers voluntarily promised to refrain from allowing women to drink on their premises.

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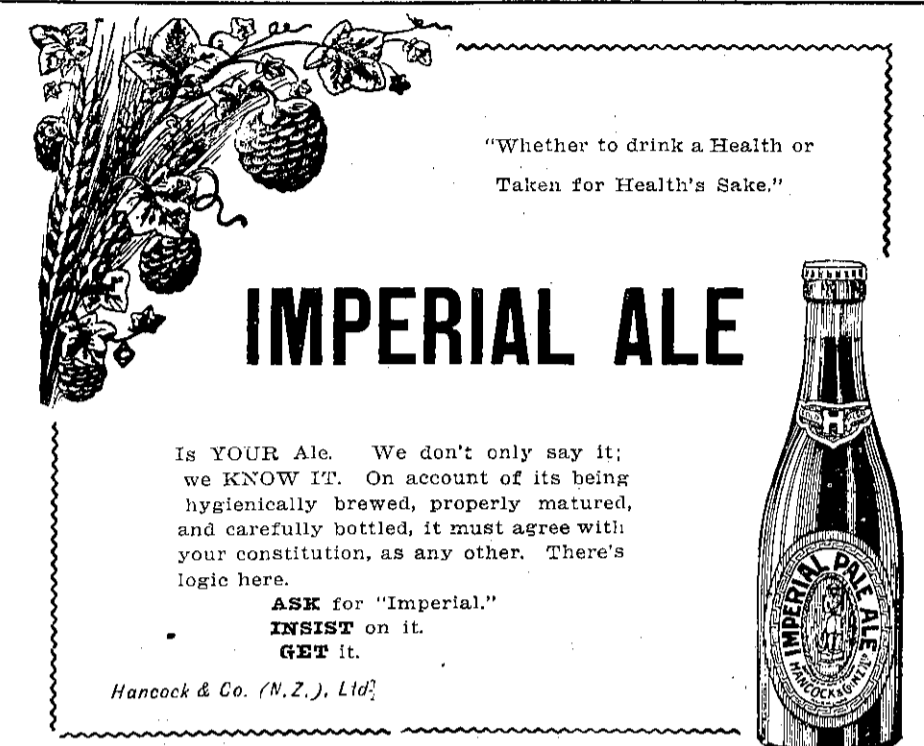
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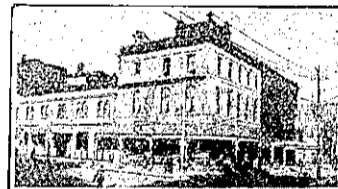
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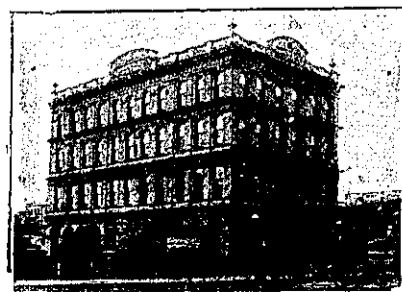
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