

EFFECTS OF "PLONK"

"National Drink That Goes to the Head"

A Little Humor in Pirie Police Court

THE sting behind three bottles of "plonk" when a party gathers to share them was the subject of a little comedy in Pirie Police Court yesterday, when William Tait, a boiler-maker, was charged with having used indecent language the previous evening. He pleaded not guilty.

Messrs. G. M. Martin and G. C. Leaker were on the bench. Sgt. G. E. Noblet prosecuted, and defendant conducted his own defence.

Constable R. Tonkin gave evidence that in consequence of a complaint received he went to a house on the corner of Mary-Elie and Little Gertrude streets. Four men and a woman were in the yard, and defendant was heard to use the bad language complained of. There were houses adjoining, and the words were spoken in a loud voice.

Witness and Constable Guiney questioned defendant and arrested him. On the way to the police station defendant said: "You have the wrong man."

Defendant (to witness): Are you sure you heard me use the language?

Witness: Yes.

Witness: Yes.

How did you know it was me?—I could pick your Scotch accent.

Defendant: Aw; that's not good enough.

He then began to make a statement and was stopped by the bench after some trouble.

Constable Guiney gave corroborative evidence. He saw the men in the yard. One of them was named Jack Limbek, and another was defendant. Limbek called defendant "Scotty." Witness was about nine feet away when the language was used.

Defendant: Was I not dead sober?

Witness: Well, I should not say that.

Do you think I would use such language if I were dead sober?—That I could not say.

Of course, you know we all use it at some time or other?—Yes; in its proper place.

GOING TO "TURN IN"

Defendant made a sworn statement. He said that he was standing in the yard of the premises where he had had a few drinks. He had not used the words complained of. He was just going to turn in when two policemen "grabbed him." That was all he knew of the matter.

Mr. Martin: You know this man named Jack?

Defendant: No; he is John. I know him as John.

Sgt. Noblet: You admit that you had a few drinks?

Defendant: Oh, yes; I had a drink or two.

How many?—I know, all right. But

How many?—I know, all right. But I'm not going to tell you.

What were you drinking; cheap wine?—Yes, "plonk"—the cheapest you can get. The real national drink.

That goes to your head quickly, does it not?—Yes; it goes to the head before it gets to the stomach. (Laughter.)

You have been here before? Three years ago?—No; four years ago.

The bench asked defendant if he desired to call any witnesses, and he turned and beckoned a determined-looking mate from the body of the court.

"ONLY THREE BOTTLES"

William Henry Chester, ironworker, stepped briskly into the box and with his face set grimly took the oath.

The Bench: What do you know about this?

Witness cleared his throat. "Well," he said, "about 9.30 last night I ran round to the place from which accused was taken, a house where Jack Limbek lives. I took along three bottles of wine. We had a couple of drinks, but I was sober, and so were the other people. There were—let me see—one, two, three, six men there besides myself."

Sgt. Noblet: And you were all perfectly sober?

Witness: Well, sergeant (scornfully), with only three bottles of wine, you know.

"There was language used," said witness. "I'll give you that in. But it is a hard thing to pick one man in half a dozen. See what I mean? 'Scotty's' a returned soldier, same as I like all returned

Scotty's a returned soldier, same as Limbek and me. Like all returned soldiers, it may be Jack or John, or any name like that. See? But look, sarge, there was language. And it is hard to pick—"

Sgt. Noblet: You say you had three bottles?

Witness: I did, sergeant. And we didn't drink the lot. There was half a bottle left this morning.

A PICK-ME-UP

You still had half a bottle left. That was for a pick-me-up this morning. I

suppose?—As you remark, sergeant; as you remark.

And you were sober?—Uh-huh.

Who were the other men there with you?—Now, sarge (admonishingly), that's for you to find out.

Who were they?—I'm not going to say. I am not here on a charge. I'm here to give evidence.

The Bench: Do you wish to press the question, sergeant?

Sgt. Noblet: Was German Charlie there?

Witness: That is for you to find out, sergeant. For you to find out, you know.

You did not hear defendant use bad language?—No; I did not.

Where were you?—I was inside, sitting on a bed making a cigarette.

Then he might have used the language in the yard and you not have heard him?—Aw, now, sergeant. There would be only about this thickness (touching the partition) between us.

Were you the barman?—I was not.

The bench said that the witness for the defence had been absolutely use-

the defence had been absolutely useless to the case, while the police evidence tallied. Defendant would be found guilty and fined £2 and costs.

Defendant: What's that?

"Two pounds and costs," shouted the clerk.

"Time to pay?" asked Tait.

The bench weighed that question and allowed 14 days.

Defendant: What's that?

Mr. Martin: Fourteen days.

Defendant: Fourteen days to pay?

Mr. Leaker (at the top of his voice): Yes; 14 days—not 40.

Defendant: Oh, yes.

Defendant and his witness then left the court together, talking it over.