

Red House,
Upton,
Bexley Heath,
Kent.
2nd January, 1923

Dear Mr. Burrill,

I find that the latest attack on Carlisle by the Glasgow prohibitionist, Peter Chalmers, is being used pretty widely and is appearing in other journals. I am therefore proposing to deal with it. I have just been reading through his article as it originally appeared in two instalments in the Scottish "GOOD TEMPLAR". The article is full of egregious mis-statements and can be pretty easily discredited but there are one or two points of detail where I shall be glad of information. They concern chiefly the houses that he names. The names do not in all cases recall the houses to me as it is some time since I was in Carlisle, and there is one, the "St. Nicholas" about which I am ignorant. You will remember that he states that the "St. Nicholas" was opened against the wish and petition of the residents in the locality and that the vicar opposed its opening. Chalmer's allegation is that the villa was turned into a drinking resort where no food is provided. Can you give me any facts as to its opening and as to the alleged opposition? What is the character of the house? Is it true that there is no provision for food of any kind? With reference to the other houses named, I notice that he follows all the other critics of the Carlisle undertaking in dealing with the old type of public house which you found in Carlisle and have not had opportunity to remodel.

If there are any brief points about any of them which should be noted in a reply perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me.

I notice that he makes a point concerning the greatly enlarged accommodation of the "London Tavern" which was converted from a Conservative Club. He says the new accommodation is five or six times that of the old. That may be exaggerated but is intelligible if regard be had to the proper design and accommodation for a good tavern.

By the way, I have often wondered what has happened to the Trades Hall. Is it still used by the Board as it was a year or two ago and does it continue to fulfil its earlier purpose? I forget if there is any provision for the sale of alcohol there. I think not. Some time I shall be glad to get news of the "Globe" at Longtown. I often wonder what would happen to it eventually, after the war industries ended and the village returned to normal conditions. You will remember that I suggested to Sir Edgar Sanders that it would make an admirable people's institute with a cinema, etc. in the large hall and the bar put in another room. It seemed to me then that apart from such use the place was too big for the village under normal conditions.

I begin to think it is time I paid another visit to Carlisle but it is extremely difficult to get away in these times and I have been so plagued with 'flu' and bronchitis this autumn and winter that I have not felt inclined to take journeys that were not absolutely necessary.

With kind regards,

Yours very sincerely,

(SD) ARTHUR SHERWELL.

4th January, 1923

Dear Mitchell,

Thank you for your letter of the 3rd January forwarding copy of the "Alliance News & Temperance Reformer". As a matter of fact, I had already seen the article in question.

The article is a clever one, and succeeds in conveying a general impression of sordidness and degradation, without making more than a very few definite allegations of fact, which can be taken up and shown to be wrong. This makes it rather difficult to answer the article effectively.

I will go through the marked paragraphs in the article.

The first marked paragraph appears to me to be merely a general introduction to the indictment. It makes no specific allegation of fact, and I do not see that I can usefully comment upon it.

The second marked paragraph contrasts the position of back doors and side doors and other contrivances for furtive drinking evinced by the Glasgow magistrates with the prevalence of back and side doors in Carlisle. In the houses that we have reconstructed, we have been careful to avoid furtive side and back entrances; and in selecting the redundant houses that were to be closed, we have in preference closed those houses which had a multiplicity of private entrances. The old houses which remain open were not designed by us, and we have certainly not added any secret entrances or exits. They remain just as they were when built by the brewers who owned them, and when licensed by the Licensing Authority for the City. The Licensing Authority saw no harm in such side and back doors as they possess, and in my opinion their side and back doors are not used to cover secret breaches of the law, or any other undesirable practices. Our managers have nothing to gain, and everything to lose if they connive at illegalities or undesirable practices, and, in spite of the very close and constant watch which is maintained on the houses through my inspectorate, I have before me no scrap of evidence that such practices are permitted. It is, of course, impracticable in a town like Carlisle, which is regularly invaded by a large number of country people in market carts on Saturdays, simply to say no more back or side doors shall be used. Back and side doors are the only way of getting to the stables,

The writer of the article mentions only two specific cases of back and side doors, namely, the Cumberland Hotel, and the Friars Tavern. The Cumberland Hotel is a property running from front to back between Botchergate and Collier Lane, and the back door opens into Collier Lane, and not, as the article suggests, into the railway station. Collier Lane is a quite open, public thoroughfare, though, of course, it is not such an important thoroughfare as Botchergate; but everyone in the place must know quite well

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that the door in Collier Lane is the door of the Cumberland Hotel, and there can be no secrecy about it. If this back door were closed, the railway men would still go to the Cumberland Hotel by the front door; but it would involve them in an additional walk of about 300 yards. They have used the back door for many years, and to attempt to close it would, in my opinion, be merely a provocative and irritating action, which would confer no real benefit to temperance or to any good object.

With regard to the Friars Tavern, it is really nonsense to speak of entry through a door in a narrow passage. The house is really built sideways to the street, and the only way of getting into it is to turn down an opening from the street and enter it from the side. The passage is not narrow, nor is the door secret or concealed in any way. I suggest that it would be useful to get Redfern to show you the survey of the premises.

As to barmaids serving in public houses, I am not aware that there is any town in England where the employment of barmaids is not a thoroughly recognised thing, and my own experience is that a good barmaid is at least as good in keeping order as a good barman. In Carlisle, we, of course, pay our barmaids a rate of wage which has been approved by the Trade Union representatives. I cannot say that the discontinuance of their employment, under conditions such as these, would confer the smallest public advantage; its only result would be to help to disorganise the local labour market, which is quite sufficiently disorganised already.

As regards the general allegations of drinking among women, it is necessary to recognise the entirely different tradition between England and Scotland in this matter. In Scotland, there appears to be a practically universal opinion which effectively prevents women going into public houses; if a woman wants a drink she buys her supplied from an "off" licence and drinks at home. There is, of course, no corresponding tradition in England; and to take the specific case of Carlisle, women were drinking in Carlisle public houses before the Control Board came here, and some of them are drinking here still. We do not want them, and we offer them no sort of attraction; they come of their own will, and we are not in a constitutional position to prevent them. What the Control Board has done is to prevent unescorted women drinking with men, and the writer of the article is quite wrong in suggesting that women are not prevented from going into the general bars. A woman with her husband goes into a smoke-room, and women do not go into general bars at all.

Nor is it accurate to say that the Control Board have made a practice of providing special bars for women. Many of the houses have jug and bottle departments, to which the women come to fetch the supper beer; if a woman desires to consume her drink in the jug and bottle department while on the premises, she is allowed to do so, but she is emphatically discouraged from making any prolonged stay.

If we put an absolute ban on the consumption of drinks by women in the jug and bottle departments, such a ban, coupled with our strict rule against women drinking in general bars, would amount to complete prohibition in Carlisle of drinking by women in any part of licensed premises. This would be a position which

is not found in any other town in England, and for which there would be no parliamentary authority, and it would be thoroughly wrong for the State, in its capacity of owner of the licensed premises in a particular place to create restrictions on the public which it has not established in its capacity of law-giver in other places. For the State to prohibit the serving of women with drink for "on" consumption may be a good thing or a bad thing; but if it is a good thing, then it should be applied universally, by the authority of Parliament, and by no other means.

With regard to the alleged crowding of women's bars at the Earl Grey and Kings Head, I can well believe, if the visit was paid on a Saturday night, that some crowding existed. In the first place, Saturday night is always the busiest time; and if we aim at providing enough accommodation to accommodate the whole of the public, without a certain amount of crowding on Saturday nights, there would be a vast amount of redundant drinking accommodation at all other periods of the week; and this would be undesirable from a temperance point of view. This is particularly and specially true of the jug and bottle departments; if we wished to prevent crowding of these on Saturday nights by women, we should have to open more jug and bottle departments in more houses; this would increase the facilities, and it cannot be fair to us to suggest in the same article first that we lay ourselves out to provide drinking facilities for women, and secondly that such facilities as we have to provide are crowded out.

With regard to the statement that the smoker room at the Kings Head was also invaded by women, I am thoroughly conversant with the clientele of that room, and I have no hesitation in suggesting that these women were with their husbands. The smoker room is not used by unescorted women at all.

With regard to the story of free fights, outside the Earl Grey, since we are not given the date on which the visit was paid, I cannot, of course, deny the statement categorically. I can categorically deny that such fights are of frequent occurrence; they are altogether unusual, as any local person familiar with the streets of the town can easily testify. I have never seen one myself during the $1\frac{1}{2}$ years I have been here.

With regard to the St. Nicholas Arms, you already have in your records practically as much as I can tell you. The decision to purchase and convert into licensed premises was taken during my predecessor's time. It so happens, however, that a few days ago I had a conversation with Mr. T. Winder, one of the Trades Council nominees to the Local Committee, who lives close to the premises, and was the recipient of a great deal of the local criticism which the proposal aroused. He told me that many of the people who had been the loudest in their denunciations of the proposal had completely changed their views after the opening of the premises, and were now candidly admitting to him that the opening of the house has been a benefit to the locality, and not a detriment.

I totally disagree with the suggestion that the opening of the St. Nicholas Arms has caused the Undertaking to lose ground in local estimation. I have no doubt that the writer of the article made the suggestion in good faith; but most of the people he met would naturally be prohibitionists, and prohibitionists in Carlisle are a very small minority. It is,

however, a very strange suggestion that the people of Carlisle as a whole are living under a policy which they object to and which they are helpless to prevent. If they have grievances, they can voice them either through the ordinary parliamentary channels, or through the Local Advisory Committee; and, although of course there is, from time to time, criticism on details of management, which are usually dealt with through the Local Advisory Committee, it is to my mind inconceivable that there can be any mass of opinion struggling to change the principles and policy which we are pursuing, and yet unable to make itself effective or even heard.

There is one statement in the article which is not marked, but which I cannot pass over - the statement that a young child of about two years of age was treated with sips of stout in the Gretna Tavern. I had heard of this statement before, which was put about by a prohibitionist worker who spent, I believe at least a week in Carlisle sitting in the Gretna Tavern, and getting into conversation with all the customers that he could meet as to the defects of that establishment. I closely questioned both the manageress of the tavern and also certain members of my staff who are in the habit of taking many of their meals there. From all of them, I have received a categorical denial that they have ever seen such an incident. I need not say that if I were satisfied that the management would allow such a thing, I should immediately change the management.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd) J. S. Eagles.