

HIGH PRICES

Dear Hats And Drinks
Dearer

BRANDY 48s. A BOTTLE !

Do people really understand to what an extent they are being "fleeced" by traders of various kinds in spite of the Profiteering Act? writes a home paper.

At a certain well-known establishment a bowler hat which last week cost 18s. will be on sale for 23s. 6d. Before the war this particular class of hat could be bought for 5s. 6d.

"How do you account for this great advance over last week's price, to say nothing of the total rise since the beginning of the war?" the shop manager was asked who supplied this information.

"That is a question which is altogether beyond me," he answered. All I know is that this hat is now to cost its wearer four times more than in pre-war days; and, although I suppose the proprietor knows what he is doing, I am just wondering whether the limit has not already been reached. To put up the price without strong reason by as much as it used to cost the buyer altogether six years ago is a step which may be questioned from the seller's standpoint, even if the consumer is left to look after himself."

"Have you noticed, as yet, in any branch of the hat business, a disposition on the part of the customer to resent the high prices demanded?"—"Well, no; as a matter of fact, until quite recently, I have been often asked for something 'better,' which, of course means a higher price still. That is the principle by which we are guided as a rule—the amount of money the purchaser is ready to spend. I do not know for certain

whether 23s. 6d. for a hat like this is a 'fair' price or not, but it may easily prove to be too much for the people in this district. I look upon the matter in the light of an experiment, which will put a big additional pressure on the purse, if not the patience, of the man in search of a hat."

After hats, drinks! With port at 6s. per bottle to the hotel proprietor, he can to-day easily make 13s. for himself by selling it at 1s. 6d. per glass to his client without raising the smallest objection on the score of profiteering. The charge of 1s. 6d. for a glass of port is certainly not exceptionally high, but whether the man who sells it at that price always pays as much as 6s. per bottle to the wholesaler is quite another question. It is possible, sometimes, to buy a bottle of port at 4s. 1d. over the counter; but the seller would much rather hand out a brand "of my own" for twice that sum. If, therefore, the consumer can actually, by good luck on occasion, procure a bottle of port for 4s. 1d., may one not assume that sometimes the stuff sold at 1s. per glass costs the seller no more than 4s. per bottle? That would place the consumer's share of capital sunk in a bottle of port sold under these conditions at 15s., which should leave the seller with at least a living margin for himself, even in these expensive days.