

## A. C. WAGNER AS AN EXPERT

### Hartford Man Has Breezy Afternoon in Brooklyn Court.

A. C. Wagner was invited to Brooklyn, N. Y., last week to testify as an expert as to certain beer vats that were the subject of a suit, the claim of the defendant being that they were inferior in quality and stability. He had been called in by the Breidt Brewing Company of Elizabeth, N. J., whose brewery was one of those he had built before coming to Hartford. The plaintiff had one of the crack Metropolitan lawyers, handy in confusing witnesses, and some of them would have been dear at 16 cents after he finished with them. When he trained his batteries on Mr. Wagner he found he had plenty of use for his surplus powder. The first thing he fired at the Hartford man was not unlike this: "What do you know about cooperage, anyhow?" Then the battle was on. Answering, Mr. Wagner said he had served much time inspecting and suggesting and understood the business thoroughly.

Lawyer—"So you are a cooper? Well, what do you know about brewing beer? Are you a brewer?"

Wagner—"Not in the strict sense of the term. I tell the brewers how to make the beer."

Lawyer—"Well, what do you know about wood?"

W.—"Surely more than you do. I served time in my father's carpenter shop, where we sawed our own logs, quartered our own oak and did everything pertaining to the trade."

L.—"Humph! Carpenter, too? Do you understand the chemical ingredients in the making of beer?"

W.—"Sure thing!"

L.—"A chemist, eh? Where did

you learn chemistry, pray?"

W.—"In Darmstadt where I was a student four years."

L.—"A chemist, too! Now, Mr. Wagner, how much krusening do you use to a given amount of beer?" (This is the process of adding newer beer to more aged beer in blending.)

W.—"Practically 10 to 15 per cent."

L.—"Ten or 15 per cent., eh? Do you know So-and-so of Milwaukee?"

W.—"Certainly."

L.—"Recognized authority on such matters, are they not?"

W.—"Quite well informed, surely."

L.—"Well, Mr. So-and-so, head of that firm, says 75 per cent. What do you say to that?"

W.—"I think he should drink that beer himself!" (General laughter, in which jury and all indulged.)

Then the lawyer tacked to the cooperage business again, and before he got in his objection Mr. Wagner had explained pretty clearly how a vat or barrel should be built. "No packing should be put between the boards or staves. The wood should come together and be forced tight by the hoops. The man who put those vats together didn't know anything about—"

L.—"Oh! I object! Object! You understand about hydraulics and the amount of pressure to the inch?"

W.—"Yes, sir. I am an engineer."

L.—"An engineer, too, eh? Contracting engineer?"

W.—"Precisely. Have planned and built many of the breweries of the present day."

L. (turning to jury)—"Well, gentlemen, the witness says he is a cooper, a brewer, an engineer, a chemist, a contractor, an architect, etc., etc., and I leave his testimony with you to analyze."

And in this way the afternoon was relieved of the possibility of monotony. The Hartford man was in good form when he left the stand and at the end of the day's session was congratulated on the manner in which he carried himself.

The real question involved was the quality of the wood used for the vats and the manner of their construction. They were guaranteed to stand twenty pounds pressure. Mr. Wagner's contracts for the same class of containers call for standing twenty pounds "continuous" pressure which requires that they be made of lasting wood. Quartered oak is usually used. The Breidt people gave this contract to the National Cooperage Co. in August 1911, and the dispute has been going on ever since.