

SHEFFIELD TEMPERANCE ASSOCIATION.

ALD. CLEGG REVIEWS THE SITUATION.

The fifty-seventh annual meeting of the above association was held at the Temperance Hall last evening, when Ald. Clegg, the president, occupied the chair. There was a good attendance of members, including Ald. W. E. Clegg, Mr. J. C. Clegg, Mr. S. Hoyland, Mr. J. Waddington, Mr. W. Richards, Mr. T. Sylvester, and other veteran workers in the cause.

Mr. G. MOULSON, hon. sec., read the annual report, which stated that the work of the association had been carried on as heretofore, and to judge from the number of pledges taken, and the audiences which had gathered in Westbar and elsewhere, they had not laboured in vain. Hundreds and thousands of persons had attended their meetings on Sunday nights to hear temperance teaching. This work could be greatly extended if they had the men to sustain the meetings. The report alluded to the general election, and to the fact that a majority of members were returned in favour of something definite being done to give effect to temperance principles. The Government had redeemed their pledge by introducing a Direct Veto Bill, and it was for temperance people everywhere to support the Government in their efforts to pass it into law. (Applause.)

Mr. J. WADDINGTON read the financial statement, which showed that the association commenced the year with a balance of £40. 1s. 8d., they had received £391. 11s. 7d., and the year closed with a deficit of £23. 4s. 6d. A good deal had been spent on the hall during the year.

The PRESIDENT, in moving the adoption of the report and statement of accounts, said there was a time when the Sheffield Temperance Association was the only organisation of the kind in the town. Now there were about 100 such societies in Sheffield, and he hoped when any of them wanted to hold meetings they would use the Temperance Hall. (Hear, hear.) At the general election and since they had every reason to be satisfied with the course events had taken. With regard to the liquor traffic, everybody admitted that something must be done, but what that something was people did not know. The temperance people had been called "fools," "fanatics," "idiot," "narrow-minded bigots," "humbugs," and everything else that was bad—(laughter)—but they had survived it all. (Applause.) He was bound to admit that had it not been for the inherent goodness of teetotalism his friends would have killed it. There had been men amongst them who had said unwise things, but they had to remember where those men came from. (Hear, hear.) Many of them had received their education in the public house, and had suffered from the effects of drink, and if they used strong language about it they were to be excused. (Applause.) How did the matter stand at the present time? They should remember that the public house was intended to be a home for persons when they were from home, and he had never heard a man apply for a licence who wanted it for his own benefit. It was always for the benefit of the public. (Hear, hear.) Of course, no one believed him, but that was what he said. (Laughter.) When the trade talked about compensation and such like it was well for them to remember how things stood with them 50 years ago. When their association was started public houses were open from Monday morning until Monday morning again. (Laughter.) They were not obliged to close at all except during Church time—morning and afternoon on Sundays. He contrasted that liberty with their present restricted hours, and asked whether, when these restrictions took place, any one dreamed of asking for compensation for the hours that were taken off. (Applause.) The power that made the public houses had the right to rule them and say during what hours drink should be sold in them. (Hear, hear.) At the meeting of licence holders in Sheffield that afternoon his friend Mr. Chambers said he did not know whether to look at the Government bill as a solicitor, or as a brewer, or as a citizen—(laughter)—but in whichever way he looked at it he did not think it fit for a free country. What an idea! How many people in Sheffield were free to sell intoxicating drink? Not more than 2000 out of a population of 325,000, and yet Mr. Chambers talked about living in a free country. The bill which the Government had introduced had caused a very great sensation throughout the country. (Hear, hear.) When he first read it he was not so very much in favour of it; but the more he looked at it the better he liked it. (Applause.) He believed the bill was an honest attempt on the part of the Government to deal with the matter, and there was no doubt the publicans and brewers were getting very frightened about it. He criticised the speeches some of them had made at their meetings, and also the letter of Sir Henry James, and said he should like to ask that learned gentleman, and also Mr. Wortley, who thought with him, if they ever knew compensation to be given for an equitable interest. Their friend Mr. Searle had had a shop in Westbar for over 50 years, and now the landlord had sold the property to the Corporation for street improvements, and Mr. Searle had received notice to quit without a penny compensation. When he (Ald. Clegg) sarcastically asked the Improvement Committee whether Mr. Searle was not entitled to compensation, the chairman, who was connected with a brewery, simply laughed—and very properly so. They were not therefore going to allow compensation to a trade which Lord Randolph Churchill had described as "devilish and destructive." (Applause.) They had their work before them. There were no fewer than 21 bills relating to the liquor traffic now before Parliament, and as temperance men they were entitled to congratulate themselves on the fact that their position was better now than it had ever been since the temperance movement commenced. (Applause.) Let them go in for the Government bill, and nothing but the bill—except where they could add to it. (Applause.)

Mr. S. HOYLAND seconded the motion, and indulged in pleasant reminiscences of the trials and difficulties with which early temperance reformers in Sheffield had to contend. He also gave statistics showing the beneficial results of temperance at the Sheffield Workhouse, and said if they could stop the drink there would not be half the number of paupers in the House, neither would there be half the rates to pay. (Applause.)

The motion was carried.

It was resolved, on the motion of Mr. GOULDSBURY, seconded by Mr. COOK,—"That this annual meeting of the Sheffield Temperance Association heartily thanks the Government for introducing the Liquor Traffic (Local Veto) Bill, and would respectfully urge that every reasonable effort should be made to pass the same during the present session, and that copies of the above resolution be sent to Sir W. F. Harcourt, Mr. Howard Vincent, Sir Ashmead Bartlett, and Mr. C. B. Smart Wortley."

Ald. Clegg was re-elected president, and the following gentlemen were elected as the committee for the ensuing year:—Messrs. H. Cook, D. Gouldsbury, G. Kirk, G. Hazley, J. C. Clegg, A. Adams, S. Hoyland, G. Moulson, J. Bradshaw, J. Bradley, W. Richards, Thos. Sylvester, C. P. Davison, C. Mahonie, K. Hope poston, J. A. Cousins, B. Sutcliffe, H. Heath, Thos. Dobson, and W. Mills. Treasurer, Josh. Waddington.