

HATHERN CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY.

OPENING OF THE NEW STORES.

Monday last was a red letter day in Hathern, the village being quite *en fete* in consequence of the public opening of the newly-erected Co-operative Stores, a description of which building we gave two weeks ago, in connection with our report of the rearing supper. Co-operation has made such rapid strides during the six years since its introduction into the village, that a high holiday—both to young and old—was determined upon for Monday. A public tea was announced for four o'clock, and by that hour the spacious room in the new building which is to be called "The Co-operative Hall" and which will seat upwards of 150 was packed full to overflowing. These were at once supplied with a capital tea, and they then dispersed to make room at the tables for an equally large number who had been awaiting what is known as "the second sitting." So large and so successful, however, was the affair, that some were even compelled to be left for a third sitting. The tea and viands, and the manner in which the whole of the catering was managed, were admirable, considering the large numbers in attendance, and reflected the highest credit upon the managing committee, and the ladies and others who attended to the tables.

All having been fully supplied with the necessary creature comforts, the tables were cleared away, and the room at once put in order for a public meeting, which was announced for half-past six, when addresses were to be delivered by Mr. A. Scotton, of Derby, secretary to the Midland Section of the Congress Board; Mr. Hemm, of Nottingham, a member of the Congress Board; Mr. T. Hind, of Leicester, the architect of the new stores; Mr. Dadley of Leicester, manager of the Co-operative Shoe Works, West End. All the gentlemen named, excepting Mr. Dadley, who had sent an apology regretting his unavoidable absence, were present, and the room was crowded almost to suffocation. The company included friends from Sheepshed, Loughborough, and other neighbouring places.

Mr. HURAM COLTMAN, of Loughborough, presided, and opened the proceedings by calling upon a glee party, consisting of Messrs. J. Mitchell, W. Mitchell, W. Warren, T. Miller, and T. Fisher to sing the glee "Victoria England's Queen," which was well and ably rendered, as also were the other glees, duetts, and songs given by the same gentlemen at intervals during the evening.

The CHAIRMAN, addressing those present as fellow-co-operators, spoke of the pleasure it gave him to preside over such a gathering, on such an interesting occasion. He had been at several gatherings of the kind in Hathern, but none were so interesting as the present. He believed 15 years ago he came to Hathern to make some remarks upon the Co-operative movement. He was glad they had done something—and it might be called a good deal—in it; he admired the courage and spirit of Hathern, and there was no more fitting occasion to refer to it than the present, when they were inaugurating the opening of a building that showed that they had made such rapid progress. The building was a credit to them, and an ornament to the town. He was glad they had gone on progressing until they had been able to make themselves a home like the present. Step by step had they improved, until they had reached the present dimensions. Capital and sales had gone on increasing from year to year, and he hoped now that they had enlarged their premises they would go on at a greater rate in the future than in the past even. He was pleased to meet with old friends. They had provided an excellent tea, and he thought their new bakery had added to this. The bread and butter, and cake were good, but those little "crumpets" they beat all. No doubt the ladies deserved great praise. He was glad this was a ladies' meeting, because he was told they had a gentlemen's meeting a few weeks ago which was quite a failure, as it was so dull and prosy through the absence of the ladies, that some were glad to get away from it. (Laughter.) In conclusion he must again congratulate the society upon the fact that co-operation had done so well in Hathern. There was yet greater good to come out of it, he felt sure, for they had doubled their capital in three years, and he knew of no other society who had done it. He advised them all to do all they could at their own stores, and strive to double both their trade and their profits. If there were any present who were not co-operators he advised them to become so, even those who were not married, but were thinking of doing so, it would be well for them to join co-operation, and lay up before-hand, and have a nice little nest-egg. He would not detain them further. There were other gentlemen present who had a good deal to tell them, and he would first call upon Mr. Section, to give them a recitation, "The Frenchman's Box."

This elicited much merriment, and though not new to some, the forcible way in which it was put before them on this occasion, could not fail to please.

Mr. SCOTTON next addressed the meeting. For some time he had had a strong desire to come to Hathern. Being but a working man, he often had to refuse when asked to speak at Co-operative societies. He was determined, however, come what may, to be at Hathern that day. Its name and fame, small as it might be, had spread about in the co-operative world. There was a saying in the poets, he thought it was Longfellow, that good was almost sure to come of a wish made on one's first visit. If there was any truth in the old adage he wished they might go on and prosper year by year, and if there was any luck they would have it. We lived in strange times—times of turmoil and trouble. One day we had "peace with honour," another we were amassing of troops, and war was uppermost in men's minds. Another day crashing of large concerns such as the Glasgow and other banks; and every day concerns were going wrong. It behoved them, as co-operators, to ask How is this? for without an alteration for the better in trade it would be a hard winter. He hoped the time of trial would teach men the best way of passing through it. They seldom heard of co-operatives going up; their wholesale society at Manchester was as safe as could be. The co-operative principle was the best, the safest, and the truest on which the trade of the country could be conducted; and if manufacturers and traders generally would carry on in the same principle they would be safe. He was glad the society at Hathern was in such a good position; and if they wished to improve let every member endeavour to increase their capital. The success of railways and other most important concerns in the country was owing to an accumulation of capital; and if co-operators would look well to their interests they must look well after an increase of capital. Many things retarded the progress of co-operation; and it rested with them, as leaders of co-operation, to tell others of their faults. He was not speaking as a teetotaller, but only fancy £140,000,000 every year spent in drink, and probably £140,000,000 more to keep the trade going. If the land growing barley only grew wheat how much better it would be for us all. Let us be a sober nation, and every man try and better his fellow man. But their progress as co-operators often depended more upon the women than the men. Wives were often against trading at their stores, and perhaps this was because they did not always want the husband to know just what they laid out. In one case he knew of a wife who was always complaining of the tea being so bad; she would not care if they sold good tea at the stores.

The husband managed to get a tea paper from the shop of a private grocer, and in this he placed and wrapped up nicely a quarter-of-a-pound of tea from the stores. He took it home and threw it upon the table, saying, "There, now my wench; try how a cup of that suits you." She was not very long in doing so, and exclaimed "Ah, now I should not mind if they sold tea like this; this is tea if you like." She was not told of her error just then, but when once convinced she became as ardent a co-operator as her husband. Just so with many; they have their little prejudices, and that keeps them from bettering either themselves or their neighbours. Then let all trade at co-operative stores; don't be tempted to patronise the numerous so-called tea-companies, who lure you with what they call presents. Many such presents are almost worthless, and cost precious little, nearly all being bought as inferior or damaged goods. Co-operation blessed those most who needed the blessing most. He had a large family of strong lads, and he knew he gained great benefit from co-operation. When he entered it cost him 1/4, and by doing his trade at the stores he had had above £100 out since in dividends. Then let them do all their trade at their own stores; be loyal to their own stores, and they will be loyal to themselves. By laying out £12 yearly they would get £120 in 25 year; and let them leave their dividends instead of drawing them out regularly and in

the same time they would amount to over £235. The speaker also advocated in a forcible manner co-operative building, and co-operative production; the former would make them their own landlords, and the latter their own employers. Trades' unions had done good, but they could never accomplish half what co-operation had done already. Let them, then, sink all little differences, if any existed; push on the glorious cause, and their power would become almost omnipotent; the old grim enemy—poverty—would be slain, and the country bloom and flower like the Garden of Eden. Sober and honest men, fair dealing, and uprightness, were the characteristics of co-operation throughout the country. (Cheers.)

Mr. HIND was next called upon. Speaking was not his province at all, he said, but he was a co-operator, and as such could congratulate the Hathern society upon meeting in a room of their own. He was also pleased to see so many ladies and other friends present. They had shown much spirit and enterprise in erecting a building of the size they had, and it was most creditable to them. There was a great deal in co-operation; no movement could raise had made such progress, he hoped they were yet only the masses—either morally, socially, or financially, like this could. Although the friends in Hathern on the first round of the ladder, and that they would go on in the same spirited way, and they would all bless the time when they first started a co-operative society. (Cheers.)

Mr. HENRY observed that some of them had seen and heard him many times. Mr. Scotton had only been once; and they all knew the old adage that a new broom sweeps well. Mr. Scotton's had swept so well, that he doubted if they would care to listen to anything he had to say. He might say, however, he was determined, heart and soul, to work for the benefit of his fellows, and in some small way leave the world better than he found it. This was one of the mottoes of co-operation. He was one of the founders of the Derby stores, and along with his friend Mr. Scotton had done all he could to further its cause. He thought the Hathersneth friends might appropriately sing, "It is our opening day;" for the meeting in their new and well-built stores was the beginning, it was to be hoped, of a series of progress in their work as co-operators. They had done well, so well that few places in this district could equal them, and none for their size. They must remember, however, that they had not done this individually, but collectively and unitedly—and, as the motto on the wall said, "Unity is strength." They had proved the truth of this, and what he wanted to impress upon them was to be sure and practice it. Let them still continue in the same course; remain true to their society, and they would be true to themselves and to each other, and all would reap the benefit. The speaker then made some lengthy and somewhat humorous references to their operations when starting the stores at Derby, and the "bungles" they sometimes got into; pointing out that by determination and a will they had always overcome the difficulties. He was pleased to see so many young people present; they were the rising generation, and would fill the places when we are in the silent tomb. To them he would say, "Take care of all your pennies." Go and put them into the co-operative savings bank, and, as the chairman had said, they would soon have a nice nest-egg. "Take care of the pennies, the pounds will take care of themselves," was a motto true as ever. The young began to form habits early, and he would advise the habit of saving. Take their savings to the co-operative stores, where they would get a better interest than in other savings banks. Working men should teach children to be frugal and provident; it was a good thing, and would conduce to their own blessing and that of others. After some further remarks, the speaker concluded by reciting "The Nightingale and the Glowworm, which, he observed, contained a moral well worthy their consideration.

Mr. SCORRON observed that he too would like a word or two with the children and young persons. He might tell them that this last summer there had been a great co-operative preacher going about ; he had been to Hathern, and to all other towns and villages. He referred to the little bee, who was a complete co-operator. He laid up his savings in the summer, until he had quite a hoard ; and when winter came upon him, and he could not go about his occupation as usual, he lived upon the honey he had saved in more pleasant weather. It was just so with children and young persons. They might lay up their little savings in a similar manner, by becoming co-operators ; and then when winter came on—the winter of old age— they would, like the little bee have something to look forward to, something to cheer and sustain them when they were unable to obtain it through misfortune or old age. He advised all to look at this, and begin to lay up in youth.

The CHAIRMAN observed he had, and no doubt they had all listened to the speeches with much interest and would go away encouraged. He was sure they were all indebted to the speakers for their able remarks.

Mr. Jno. BRADWICK next recited some verses on the opening of their new stores, and which he had written for the occasion.

Mr. H. TOLLINGTON (the secretary) gave some interesting figures showing the increased prosperity of the society, and a comparison, one with another, of the sales, &c., during five years. The statements were most satisfactory, and were received with applause.

On the motion of Mr. J. MITCHELL and Mr. BRADWICK, a hearty vote of thanks was given to the speakers, and other visiting gentlemen ; and the having been acknowledged, the usual votes of thank to the chairman, to the ladies, and others who had catered for the tea, to the committee, &c., terminated a pleasant evening's proceedings.

We may add that the room was very prettily decorated with flowers, &c., which added much to its comfort and appearance.