

THE RISE OF GOOD-TEMPLARISM.

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THIS singular organisation was a few years ago introduced into England from the United States. It had at first great obstacles to overcome, but it has been so far successful as to obtain the support of persons representing at least 100,000 English families, and ranging in social position from the crossing-sweeper to the lady of title and the member of Parliament. It is, however, essentially a working class movement.

Good-Templarism is only a form of teetotalism—that is to say, of total abstinence from all alcoholic beverages. Nay, start not, gentle reader; I am not about to give you a temperance lecture, nor to go over the arguments in support of teetotalism. It

is of the peculiar method of propagating temperance adopted by the Good Templar body that I have to speak. It is, however, desirable to give a few words of introduction to the subject, and to relate the circumstances which, more than twenty years ago, led in the United States to the formation of the order.

Forty or fifty years ago, the inhabitants of the United States were addicted to spirit-drinking to an extent which, in these more sober days, would hardly be credited. Distilleries existed in thousands. Young and old of both sexes reckoned ardent spirits among the necessities of life. Intemperance accordingly abounded. What might now be the state of society

had these customs not been checked it is difficult to conjecture. Then, as now, there were philanthropists who strove to prevent evil in all its forms. These earnest workers established temperance societies, the members of which pledged themselves to abstain from ardent spirits, and only sparingly to drink wines and malt liquors. The complete and disheartening failure of these well-meant attempts to prevent drunkenness, is the surest proof that total abstinence is the only effectual safeguard.

Who can describe the horrors of intemperance? Of all vices intemperance is the most insidious. Slowly but surely it gains strength, and is so hard to conquer. Even when the drunkard is reclaimed—and would that those who think it easy to check intemperance might try to save the inebriate from himself—the pangs of an outraged conscience long make amendment hard, long drive their victim to the brink of destruction. He who has drunk long and deep of ardent spirits finds it not so hard to reform as to free himself from the horrible visions, the distress of mind haunting him day and night.

To return from this digression. Some good was undoubtedly done by these early efforts. Public attention was directed to the horrors of drunkenness. But before long it was found that many of the supposed converts to moderation could not really control themselves. To meet these distressing cases another step was taken, and total abstinence from all alcoholic beverages became the practice of a large and rapidly increasing body,

Tens of thousands flocked to the teetotal standard. The philanthropic and the powerful were aroused. The Church took up the cry of self-denial for the sake of example. Able men devoted their energy to writing on the expediency, and in some cases the necessity, of total abstinence.

Then came the Washingtonian movement, commenced in 1840, by a handful of drunken men, who drew up and signed a pledge in a liquor shop in the city of Washington. These ex-drunkards became the nucleus of a body of thousands of reclaimed drunkards. In a few years the pledged abstainers are said to have amounted to a million and a quarter. A Congressional Temperance Society was actually formed. The crews of Government vessels were given permission to have spirits or money, as they preferred. Hundreds of vessels left port without any liquor on board. Hundreds of distilleries had to be closed. The habit of drinking in private houses received a blow from which it has never completely recovered.

Next came a cry against holding benefit societies in public-houses. Temperance benefit societies were formed, which enrolled many thousands of members. The older benefit societies, to save themselves from ruin, were obliged to hold their meetings in houses where stimulants were not sold. Even now the results of this movement are shown in the objections the

artisans of the United States would make, were they asked to join clubs meeting in public-houses.

A reaction came. Total abstinence at that time in the United States implied to a certain extent what it still implies in our own country, a kind of social ostracism, not very pleasant to bear. The sellers of strong drink could not be expected tamely to submit to ruin. They exerted themselves to get a livelihood with a degree of energy that in many places induced them to transform their dull old-fashioned inns, and plain whiskey bars, into brilliant "saloons," where the "free lunch" enticed the self-indulgent, and gaiety and music attracted the frivolous. The temperance pledge—the mere signing of a name under the, perhaps, temporary excitement of a public meeting—proved, in thousands of cases, only a feeble protection to the victims of a morbid appetite. This incapacity to resist temptation on the one side, and the new and almost irresistible attractions on the other, resulted in numbers who had once apparently been reclaimed plunging again into habits of intemperance, and too often their last state was worse than their first.

Then the question assumed a different phase. Abstinents took up the cry, "Suppress the liquor traffic!" They declared that as the liquor traffic existed by the sanction of the law, it could be legally suppressed. Liquor shops, they contended, were opened as a public convenience, and the public had a right to oppose them as soon as they came round to the opinion that such places were become a nuisance. The licensing restrictions on the liquor traffic, sanctioned by civilised governments, appeared to them proofs of the right of legislative interference with a trade admitted to be injurious and dangerous.

These circumstances induced the disciples of total abstinence to inaugurate a new scheme for the propagation of their principles, the retention of their converts, and the discomfiture of their enemies. To do this, a small body of men—consisting, it is said, principally of Wesleyan Methodists and Freemasons—met together and built up an organisation remarkable in its general features for copying the outward polity of John Wesley, and for incorporating in its internal discipline the rule of the ancient Order of the Knights Templars. Months, years passed before the new movement had gained strength, and was able to stand unaided; but it now, probably, embraces a greater number of people than almost any other social or moral organisation.

This society—"The Independent Order of Good Templars"—at first sight presents many singular features. Though formed in a republican country, it enforces implicit obedience to the commands of a few almost irresponsible officers, who are empowered to administer the laws by which it determines to govern itself. Professing to illustrate a perfectly democratic government, it yet invests its chief with unassailable prerogatives of no trivial kind. It seems to assert the equality of all men, yet has instituted degrees or gradations of rank, the steps to which are guarded with jealous care. It affects in its name a spirit of chivalry, yet has in it a large number of the broken-spirited and down-trodden, who have with difficulty been snatched

out of the vortex of intemperance. It is, like all secret societies, under the ban of the Romish Church, and is pre-eminently a "Nonconformist" order, yet has its ritual, the use of which at every meeting is imperative. Largely the refuge of the poor, it yet rejoices in sounding titles, and glitters in imposing regalia. It affects the most stringent, not to say ascetic, pledge, yet is to its own members the centre of sociability. It claims to be solely formed for benevolent purposes, yet in its financial system is absolutely non-beneficiary. It aims to help those who are helpless, yet declines the acceptance of donations from opulent sympathisers not connected with the order. Last, but not least, possessing a multiplicity of secret signs, salutations, tests, and pass-words, it yet freely admits the gentler sex into the recesses of its "solemn mysteries."

We mention these things for the reader's guidance alone, leaving him to judge from what follows whether they are really inconsistencies.

The name of the order is taken from the Knights Templars, who at their formation bound themselves by a life-long vow to free the path to the Holy Sepulchre of the dangers besetting Christian pilgrims, in the shape of cruel and infidel Saracens. The modern Templars vow life-long hostility to their foe, intemperance, which they believe is the greatest obstacle to moral and spiritual progress. These objects are beautifully expressed in the words of one of their own songs:—

"When Templar Knights, in days of old,
Went forth a noble band,
With courage high and bearing bold,
To save the Holy Land;
They took the field in armour bright
With helmet, shield, and sword,
And bound by holy vows to fight
The battles of the Lord.

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"We take the name those heroes bore,
We arm from top to toe,
And seek to drive from Britain's shore
A worse than Moslem foe.
A holier vow than theirs we take,
We wage a nobler strife:
The wounds we give no hearts can break,
We bring not death, but life."

The pledge of the order binds its members not to take fermented drinks as beverages as long as they live, nor to furnish them or cause them to be furnished to others, and to wage unceasing warfare against drinking customs and the drink traffic.

Ten persons may be formed into a lodge, on paying a fee for charter and books. Each lodge elects its officers and makes its own bye-laws, in which the age for admission and the amount of fees are decided, the latter being frequently as low as 1s. 6d. entrance, and 1s. per quarter subscription. Applicants for membership are visited and reported upon by a committee, and then balloted for, four black balls being sufficient to reject. No person interested or engaged in the drink traffic is eligible, and every one proposed must profess a belief in the existence and power of Almighty God as the Ruler and Governor of all things. The initiatory service occupies about twenty minutes, and is intended to impress the convert, although no startling effects are aimed at. All those things which

some persons associate with secret societies are wanting. The vow of abstinence is not an oath, nor does the candidate kneel to take it. Of course, the ceremonies are kept secret from outsiders. Enough, however, can be gathered from the published rules to show the course of procedure. A chaplain offers extemporary prayers, or reads them from the ritual, just as he prefers. There are short services for opening and closing, each of which includes singing and prayer. There is a form also for the installation of officers. These functionaries are, by the way, changed or re-elected every quarter. The book of ceremonies, or "Ritual," is the only secret work of the order. The constitutions, bye-laws, and published journals of proceedings are accessible to the public. When once a member is admitted, he possesses all the privileges the order can confer, and cannot be removed unless condemned by a two-thirds ballot vote of his lodge, and that only after an investigation, conducted in accordance with laws which give the accused every protection; and besides, he has the right of appeal to the higher courts of the order. At the commencement of each quarter, a pass-word is forwarded to every lodge in the world, and is communicated by the president to the members of his own lodge only, and not even to them till they have paid their quarterly contributions in advance. The pass-word serves at once for a receipt for the contribution, and as a ticket of admission, without which no member can pass the guards at the doors. Travelling members can, by paying in advance, obtain a travelling certificate and pass-word, available for a year. There are modes of salutation for entering and leaving a lodge; grips, by means of which members recognise strangers who belong to the order, and other tests available under almost all conceivable circumstances. Members who remain faithful to their vow may, after a time, on displaying an adequate knowledge of the working of the order, apply for permission to proceed to the higher degrees, to which they are elected by those who have previously obtained the rank desired. Each degree involves a more advanced initiatory service, and has its distinct sign, pass-word, and regalia. These degrees are intended to be educational in their effects, and to inculcate faithfulness, self-denial, and equity. When in the lodge, every member is required to wear regalia, which consists of a collar joined in front with a rosette. Members are occasionally allowed to wear them in public, as for example at lodge anniversaries, &c.

The government of the order is thoroughly democratic. Every local or "subordinate" lodge elects representatives to the district or county lodge, which holds quarterly sessions; the districts are, in their turn, represented in the Grand or National Lodge, which meets annually in a large town selected for the purpose, its session lasting several days. The National Lodges choose delegates to the International or "Right Worthy" Grand Lodge, which has many times met in the United States, twice in Canada, and once in England.

About ten per cent. of the receipts of the subordinate lodges are paid as a tax to the body one grade higher,

which transmits a portion to the body still higher, and the latter in its turn to the highest; so the complex fabric is, with the profits derived from the sale of publications and lodge necessities, well supported by contributions small in themselves, but in the aggregate large. In the interval between the annual sessions the business of the order is transacted by an Executive Council, composed of the chief officers—the President and the Secretary frequently devoting their whole time to the duties of their respective offices. The President of each Grand Lodge—yclept the "Grand Worthy Chief Templar"—decides questions of law, hears appeals (but his judgments may be reversed by the Grand Lodge), superintends plans for the extension of the order, and spends much time in attending district meetings. The Chief Secretary has charge of the statistics and accounts, and carries on the office business. The President, or Grand Chief, has a deputy in each lodge, who installs the officers, collects the tax for the Grand Lodge, and forwards tables of statistics to the latter. The Grand Chief may commission other members to be his special deputies, whereby they become installing officers, and have a *locus standi*—though without voting power—in the Grand Lodge. In theory the Grand Chief has absolute power to revoke any of these commissions, in practice these officers are seldom commissioned or removed without the concurrence of the local authorities. This power has, however, to be exercised with care, seeing that even the executive officers are subject to a ballot vote every year, while even the highest officer in the order is accountable to a subordinate lodge as a member thereof, and were he suspended by or expelled from this local lodge, would *ipso facto* forfeit all privileges of office or membership in the higher bodies.

The largest jurisdiction, in point of numbers, is that of England, whose Grand Lodge superintends over 3,500 lodges, with 200,000 members. Three-fourths of these lodges have been chartered during the past three years. Probably one-half of them hold their weekly meetings in chapels and schools, principally through the permission of ministers of religion, who in England alone have joined the order to the number of 1,000.

About one-half of the Good Templars, it is estimated, were not "teetotalers" till they joined the order, and it is believed that 14,000 of them have been reclaimed from confirmed intemperance. 400 lodges have libraries, and there are 1,600 singing classes or choirs connected with the order. During the last twelve months the English members have held 166,000 lodge "sessions," and over 20,000 public meetings—an average of 68 public meetings per day. They support two illustrated weekly papers, about twenty monthly magazines, and spend about £5,000 per annum in purchasing temperance literature from the Grand Lodge, which has printing-presses, a large office, and a numerous staff in Birmingham. When it is remembered that, until seven or eight years ago, this society was unknown in this country, and that when introduced it had during the first two years a hard struggle for life, it must be admitted that its success is significant and astonishing.