

"On the Stump for the Pump."

BY SIR WILFRID LAWSON.



THE Editor of THE STRAND asks Sir W. Lawson to send him an article with some such title as 'Thirty Years of Temperance Advocacy,' or 'On the Stump for the Pump.' "

You ask me to write "On the Stump for the Pump," Don't you think 'twould be better, "The Pump on the Stump?"

Sure that "pump" should be able a tale to unfold,
For you hint in your letter it's thirty years old!
Just think of one pumping for thirty long years,
And the water scarce yet has got up to their ears.
Yet while water's so hard to the right pitch to rise,
The full tide of beer mounts quite up to our eyes.
There is Goschen, and Randolph, and Booth, and old
Smith,

Men of fame and renown, and great vigour and pith,
They come with their brooms, and they come with
their mops,

And they labour and sweep, but the tide never stops.
Away in the torrent go virtue and wealth,
Peace, plenty, and happiness, order and health,
And "Bung" with a chuckle cries, "Pump as you
may,

But beer and the brewer still carry the day."
Now you kindly have asked me to say what I think
On this troublesome, terrible question of drink.
So the "Pump" will endeavour to pour something out,
A "pump" at the least should be able to "spout!"
Well, well, I must hope that I shall not quite fail,
So the "Pump," as you've asked him, will pour out
his tale.

Almost everyone who proposes a toast at a public dinner commences his speech by saying that he feels himself to be the most unfit person who could have been selected to perform the duty.

In this matter I am neither the most fit, nor the most unfit person to give such a narrative as the Editor desires. There are many advocates of temperance still living who have addressed far more audiences on the subject than I have done, and whose account of their experience would be far more interesting and instructive than mine can be.

On the other hand—

"I've been about a bit in my time,
And troubles I've seen a few;
But I always found it the best of plans
To paddle my own canoe."

And I have sometimes had to paddle that canoe through tolerably stormy waters. For generations a "Temperance lecturer" has usually been viewed by the "respectable" classes with a mixture of pity and contempt. Drink was blended with all our ideas of real happiness and enjoyment. Doctors ordered drink as a potent medicine, and, at the same time, as a valuable article of daily diet. Clergymen, certainly at times, mildly hinted that their flocks might peradventure be more moderate in its consumption, but rarely indeed condemned the thing itself.

Elections were won to the inspiring cry of the "National Church and the National Beverage," while all those who had enriched themselves by the making and selling of strong drink were held in the highest esteem and veneration by the rest of the community.

For anyone to enter on a crusade against drink was held to be audacious, vulgar, disreputable, and unconstitutional, and a man who took such a course was considered to be, if not a fool, certainly a hypocritical knave. I have always thought that Dickens' portrait of "Stiggins, the Temperance lecturer," did much to maintain this idea. Any way, it was in full force at the time when I ventured to launch the above-mentioned cause.

But I did not start as a Temperance lecturer. The field was already well occupied. Father Mathew, Joseph Livesey, Samuel Bowling, and many other devoted men had said pretty well all that could be said in favour of abstinence from intoxicating liquor, and, where their teaching had been

followed, had done a world of good. What struck me as very hard was, that these noble men should expend time, money, and labour at their own charges in promoting the Temperance reformation which Richard Cobden says "lies at the foundation of every social and political reform," and that all the time the Government of the country should appoint thousands and thousands of agents to promote the sale and consumption of the very article which causes all the drunkenness and misery.

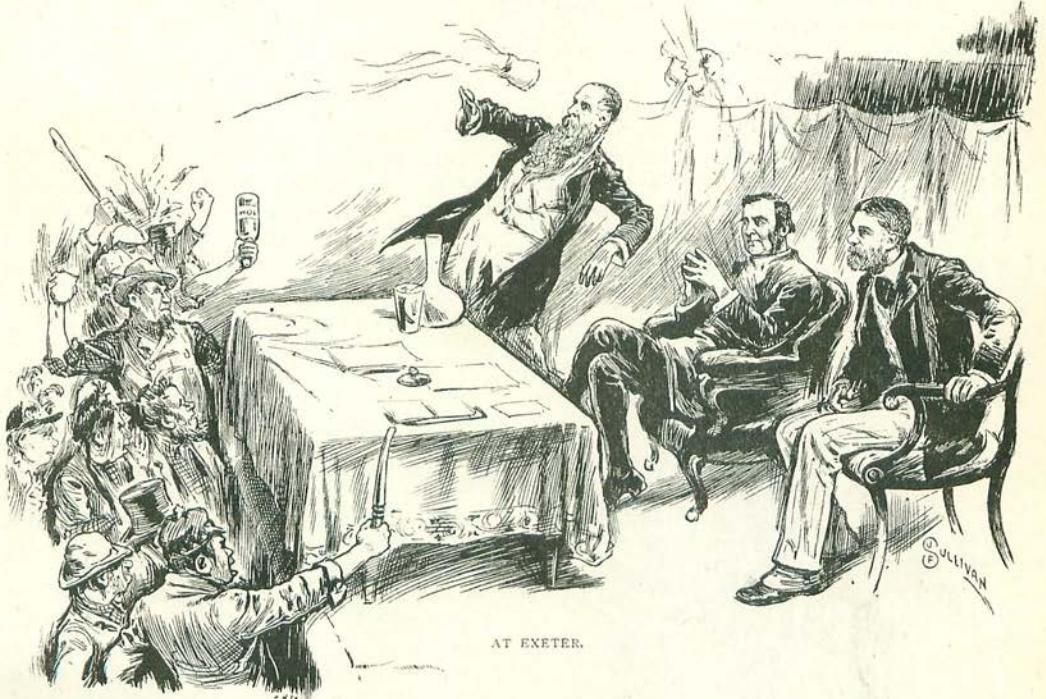
Be it remembered that the philanthropic Temperance advocates got no monetary premium on any success which they might attain among



FATHER MATHEW.

get their customers to consume—their system being one of "payment by results." For anyone to raise his voice against this most lucrative and powerful monopoly was looked upon as an audacious impertinence. Our meetings were occasionally broken up by the friends and supporters of the liquor power. I remember a big meeting at Exeter with the present Bishop of London in the chair. A disorderly force of men well primed for the business invaded and pervaded the hall, yelling, singing, and jostling the audience. They

broke up the chairs and used them as weapons of offence. The Bishop kept his seat, perfectly calm and collected, but,



AT EXETER.

the people, while the Government agents who sold the drink were pecuniarily interested in every glass which they could

as the police declined to interfere for our protection, the enemy succeeded in their object and broke up the meeting, after

breaking the ribs of our unlucky men and covering the Bishop and Sir G. Trevelyan and myself with flour, so that we looked as though we had just returned from the "Derby."

At Sandwich, also, we once had a great row. The publicans' friends pretty well packed the meeting, and with songs, coees, horns, &c., prevented our speaking. But we got a speech out of one of the rioters, and although short, it was the best speech I had ever heard in favour of prohibition.

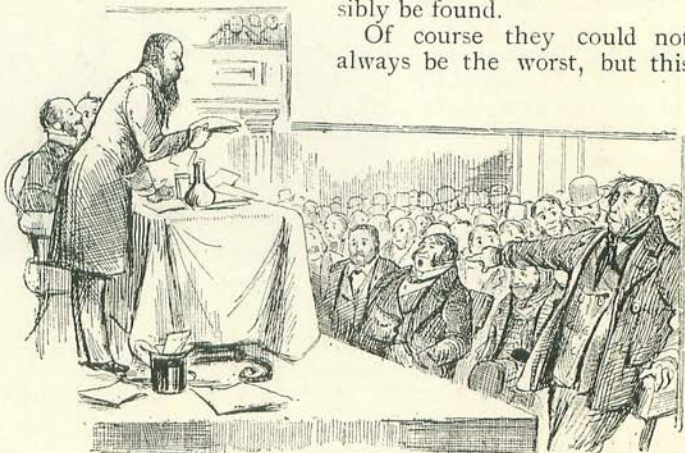
The man was tolerably drunk, but able to stand. Close to the platform was sitting the great brewer of the place, looking most demure and respectable, but who had probably directly or indirectly organised the riot. Steadying himself as well as he could, the man pointed with his hand towards the great brewer, and simply said, "I want to know what's to become of this gentleman?" If anyone will ponder on this speech for a moment or two the nature and object of the licensing system will be clear enough.

As a rule, I think it was generally in the places where the brewers—our British Ale Kings—were exceptionally strong that these violent scenes occurred. But generally when there had been a pretty good rowdy meeting, we used to come again soon after,

when our friends, taught by the experience, used to take precautions for ensuring "law and order," so that the rows probably eventually did us more good than harm.

One thing which struck me much in perambulating the country was, that wherever I went the friends who kindly entertained me were almost always pessimists, who asserted that the place we were then in was one of the very worst places for drunkenness which could possibly be found.

Of course they could not always be the worst, but this



"WHAT'S TO BECOME OF THIS GENTLEMAN?"

testimony leads one to think that things must be bad enough all round.

I suppose the Editor, when asking for reminiscences of "Thirty Years' Temperance Advocacy" includes advocacy in the House of Commons. No one would think that it was personally needed in that assembly, but only for the check of intemperance outside.

Yet I once heard a member, who was known not to be a teetotaler, say that he could not believe something which the Government had stated, although he could swallow a great deal—a statement which was received with great acquiescent cheering from all parts of the House. But my advocacy in the House was of prohibition of the liquor traffic, and not of total abstinence. I proposed that there should be prohibitory districts wherever the inhabitants clearly and distinctly expressed a desire for freedom from liquor shops. This was thought to be a most shocking proposition. Was it to be supposed that the magistrates, who were the licensing authorities, did not know the requirements of the neighbourhood far better than the inhabitants of that neighbourhood knew it themselves! The very



"A PESSIMIST."

idea was looked upon as a species of blasphemy.

A Bill must have two names endorsing it before it can be introduced into the House of Commons. At that time I hardly knew where I should get the second name which was required. I at last got it in this way. Mr. Bazley (afterwards Sir Thomas Bazley) then represented Manchester. Some working men who were either his neighbours or constituents, and who were very keen about the Bill, interviewed him and talked over the Bill. I fancy he made some objection to it, when the men said, "Mr. Bazley, is there not a village which belongs to you, and where you prohibit all sale of drink?"

"Yes," said Mr. Bazley, "and with the best effect."

"And will you not give us the same power of protecting ourselves which you enjoy?"

"I will," said Mr. Bazley, and he put his name on the back of my Bill.

But few indeed would vote for such a measure in those days. Lord Randolph Churchill said that in that very year, 1890, two-thirds of the members of the House of Commons were terrorised by the liquor trade. And many must have been in that abject condition in 1865, when the first Bill was introduced. At all events, whether through terror of publicans, or contempt for Temperance advocates, or ignorance of the enormity of the evil arising from drinking, the great majority of the House of Commons were dead against any legislation tending to cripple the "liquor traffic." We had all the old arguments trotted out—"Liberty of the Subject"—"Making men sober by Act of Parliament," and so forth. I have sometimes wondered why they thought it absolutely necessary to iterate and reiterate all this unmeaning jargon. They had made up their minds that it would not be safe to vote against the publicans, and the preliminary talk was

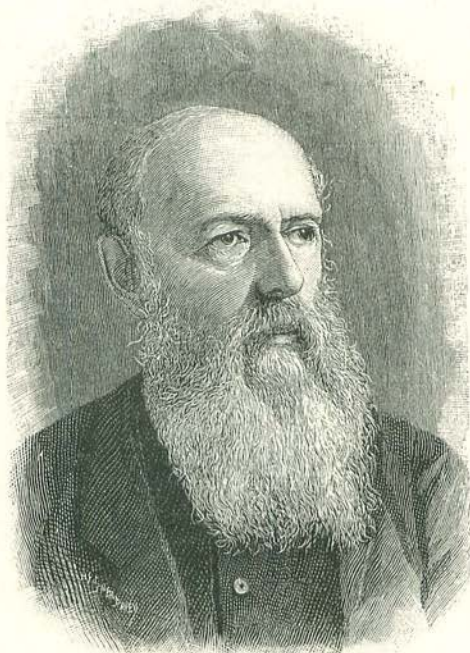
a superfluous expenditure of energy. On the first division I only got about forty votes, and that was a larger number than most persons expected. But I must not commence a long story of how we slowly but steadily gained ground in the House. The history of all reforms is in its general features pretty much the same. Someone has roughly summed up the progress of reforms by saying, First, they are laughed at; then they are said to be contrary to Scripture; then it is said that everybody knew them before. We have long left for ever the days of divisions of forty, and now

almost everyone admits that the public are entitled to *some* powers of self-protection from the liquor trade. It is still thought the proper thing to call everyone who is in earnest in trying to get that protection for the people, an extreme man; but everyone knows that this is only the orthodox political slang which must be employed when argument is wanting.

Lord Rosebery has declared that the Temperance men are the backbone of the Liberal Party. The Conservative Party also now announce themselves to be warm advocates of Temperance. We cannot say that they have been

at it for "thirty years," since they only took, as a party, any overt legislative action two years ago by their Compensation to Brewers' Bill, which they again attempted to pass last year.

Many persons thought that endowing publichouses would not tend to reduce drinking, but, be that as it may, it was pleasant to see the intense zeal with which the leaders of the Conservative Party devoted themselves to what they considered the interests of Temperance. All the other business of the Session was set aside. The Government Press urged no surrender. Diminishing majorities did not damp their ardour. The forces were summoned to be



SIR WILFRID LAWSON.

present at all costs when this Temperance measure was on hand. One memorable day many legislators were absolutely compelled to hurry back from Ascot to take part in an early division. Lord Hartington was among the number, and it is said that, being only just in time, he was seen to *run* through the lobby, a fact unprecedented in modern political history.

All this proves that there never were so many Temperance advocates as there are at this instant. At the same time, I am inclined to think that there has seldom been more drinking than there is in the season of good trade and high wages. Whether it will require an additional thirty years of Temperance advocacy before we deal an effectual blow at what has been termed the "intoxicating interests," who can say? The good sign, as noted above, is, that everybody is calling out that something must be done. Englishmen generally say this for a long time before they really do anything, but the recent prolific re-

sponse to General Booth's appeal for funds to rescue the perishing, seems to indicate that the public are really and keenly touched by all the misery around them.

The General says "Nine-tenths of England's misery is Drink." That is just what the Temperance advocates have been saying for nearly twice thirty years. Their hour of triumph is growing appreciably nearer. It will come so soon as the good, noble, and self-denying men who now deal with the misery which General Booth tells us is the effect of drink, will strike at the drink which is the *cause* of that misery. When we have done that, we may confidently look forward to an England which shall be as different from the England of to-day, as light is from darkness.

"Then shall Misery's sons
and daughters
In their lowly dwelling
sing,
Bounteous as the Nile's
dark waters,
Undiscovered as their
spring;
We shall scatter through
the land
Blessing with a secret
hand."

