



## The Co-operative Movement and Its Festivals.

BY F. KLICKMANN.

*Illustrated by T. S. C. CROWTHER, H. AUSTIN; and from Photographs.*



HERE are many people who labour under the delusion that London is empty during August; indeed it is a common fallacy entertained by persons who are out of town themselves at this season of the year, and who therefore trouble themselves little as to what happens in their absence. But the streets of our great city could tell a very different tale—a tale which would be most heartily endorsed by the general manager of the Crystal Palace, Mr. H. Gillman.

August is the month in which the “co-operators” of the land are wont to foregather at the only place in the kingdom that could possibly accommodate them—the popular glass-house at Sydenham. Before entering upon the annual festivals, one word must be said about the co-operative movement itself. Of its origin there is no need to write; the indefatigable labour and the sympathy extended to it in its infancy by such men as Kingsley, Ruskin, Carlyle, Judge Hughes (the author of “Tom Brown’s School-

days”), Maurice, and many others, are now matters of history. But the dimensions to which the movement has now attained must surely far and away exceed the most sanguine dreams of its pioneers. It is generally understood that great bodies move slowly. If this be granted then exception must be made in favour of the many movements and societies with the appellation “co-operative,” for there is evidence of progress to a most surprising degree.

Seeing that the secret of the successful working lies in its simplicity, one marvels that the world had to wait until the nineteenth century before any really appreciable vitality in co-operation was noticeable. To-day, so numerous are the societies and so diverse their purposes, that the co-operative influence is all over the United Kingdom, and, from the thrifty little shop marked “Co-operatives Stores” to the opulent Civil Service Supply Association, it is a power to be felt and considered.

Each year brings to light new theories for the emancipation of the worker from long hours and profitless



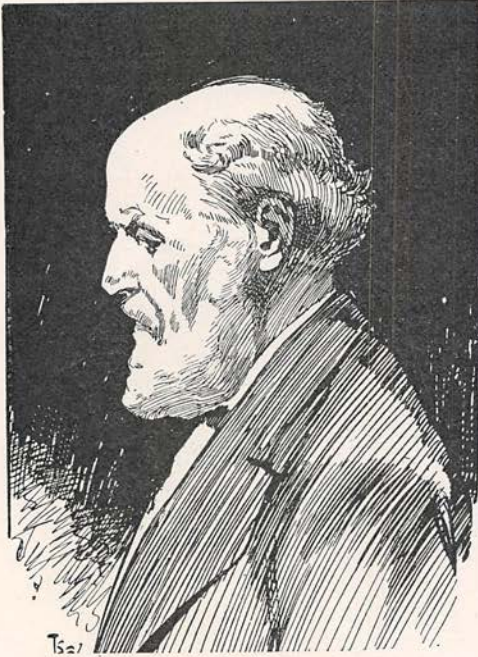
*From a photo by*

THE LATE MR. THOMAS HUGHES, Q.C.

*(Author of “Tom Brown’s Schooldays,” and a leader in the co-operation movement.)*

[Gibson.





THE LATE EDWARD VANSITTART NEALE.  
(A co-operative pioneer.)

capital that employs him, and taking part in the management, is trained in a larger responsibility than the mere wage-servant knows."

While competition is entirely removed from the true objects of co-operation, there exists a friendly rivalry *inter se* in the direction of business energy and perfection of production, whether of boots and shoes, bicycles, dresses, furniture, provisions, agricultural produce, or the beauties of horticulture.

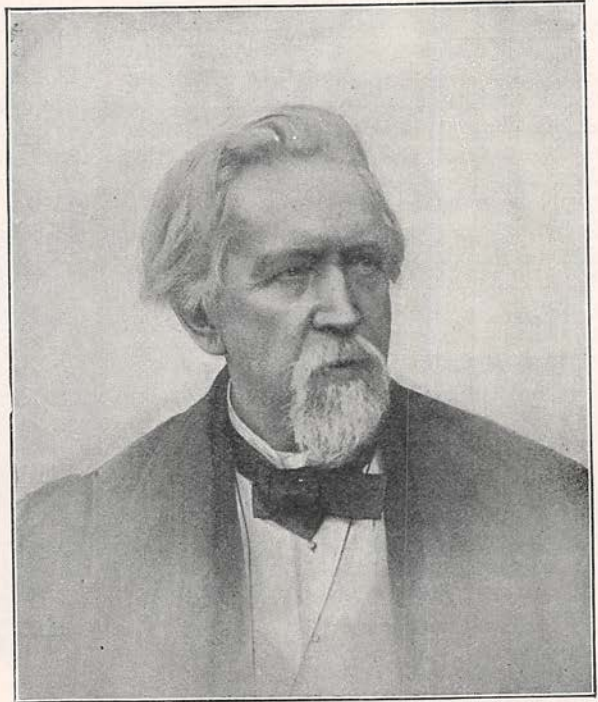
Accordingly a National Co-operative Festival is held at the Crystal Palace, and is one of the most successful of the many annual festivals held there. The attendance at the gatherings speaks of the sure and steady increase in the popularity of the object. At the 1888 festival there were 27,169 visitors to the Palace, and last year the numbers had reached 41,755. The members of the co-operative movement now number about a million and a half, whilst over six millions sterling of profits were divided amongst them last year. In the face of these figures sceptics in statistics must admit that there is "something in it."

To watch the varied scenes and endless interests at the Crystal Palace on these

labour. Some would have compulsory restrictions as to the number of hours of work per day, with a limited output. Others insist that work should cease long before a man has reached his prime.

Every endeavour that is honest in its intent to enable all men to enjoy legitimately the fruit of their honourable labour, according to individual ability, commends itself by its intrinsic merit. This is the *raison d'être* of all co-operative productive movements.

Co-operators maintain that their system of industry "seeks to give the worker a direct share in the profits of his work and in the management of it. Unable in most cases to supply all the capital to conduct his industry on modern methods, he shares control with those who aid in finding capital and trade. The adherents of this system believe that it solves the labour question, in so far as it consists of the struggle between capital and labour for a share in the results of their joint enterprise, and that the worker, finding part of the



From a photo by]

[Co-operative Society, Maidstone.

MR. GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.  
(A pioneer in the co-operative movement.)



festival days might confirm the foreigner in his idea that we are a "nation of shop-keepers," but should also remind him, so far as the co-operator is concerned, of the words of Mr. W. S. Gilbert—

His capacity for innocent enjoyment  
Is just as great as any other man's.

Briefly the day's programme consists of flower show; competitive exhibition of

flowers, fruit and vegetables; co-operative productive exhibition; conferences; athletic meetings; children's sports and games; choral contests; organ recitals, and the large choral concert on the Handel orchestra.

When it is realised that all the above are in addition to the regular attractions always available at the Crystal Palace, it is easy to understand the zeal which is to be found only in co-operators. They will often travel



"ONE AND ALL" NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE FLOWER SHOW AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.



the preceding night from some remote part of the country, reaching the London terminus—say Paddington or Euston—an hour or so after cock-crow. The first thing to be done on arriving in London is to partake of a good meal to fortify them for the arduous

thinking that the general move of the party would then be Crystal-Palace-ward. But this is seldom the case. These vigorous, indefatigable workers, many of them literally "sons of toil," have what may be termed a concentrated, all-embracing method of



CO-OPERATORS AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE.

day before them. This refectation can be ordered in advance at some near restaurant, though more often it is brought with them. This important function being over, the serious business of the day begins.

The uninitiated might be pardoned for

taking a day's pleasure. Probably Covent Garden Market will be the first place visited; they will then make their way to Westminster Abbey, arriving there at 8.30 a.m., and waiting patiently for the doors to be opened at 9 o'clock. Of course the Houses



of Parliament, the British Museum, Trafalgar Square, and the Tower, have each plenty of visitors.

They will eventually arrive at the Crystal Palace some time between 10 o'clock and



From a photo by [A. Weston.]  
MR. G. W. WILLIAMS.  
(Conductor of the festival.)

11.30, and feast their eyes on the appetizing programmes, which have never failed to satisfy the most exacting of the 300,000 people who have assembled at these co-operative festivals.

"Jaded" you think the

travellers must be by now? Nothing of the sort. They are as fresh as larks, they will tell you. And by the time the afternoon concert commences, 7000 of them will be ready to out-sing to any extent those very industrious birds. But the concert is not till 3 o'clock, and there is much to be seen and much to be done before that hour.

As the morning advances the railway lines running to the Palace are fairly blocked with trains, the number of passengers in each compartment varying from fifteen to twenty. It will be readily understood that, however earnestly the railway companies may desire to meet the wishes of their passengers, it is not an easy matter to land, without a slight crush, 42,000 persons all within the space of a couple of hours. Yet this is a problem with which they valiantly struggle each year, and on the whole it must be said that they come out of the ordeal with tolerable success. The amount of "specials" that are engaged by co-operators all over the country to convey them to the annual festival is very large.

The Crystal Palace authorities make excellent arrangements for the general well-being of the vast throngs that pour in upon them, and also for the exhibits, which are past counting. For it must be remembered that

during the week of the festival the Palace is, from one end to the other, one vast exhibition of flowers, fruit and vegetables (these under the direction of the Agricultural and Horticultural Association), to say

nothing of the thousand-and-one other commodities in which co-operators deal, and the works, both useful and artistic, entered in competition for the many valuable prizes that are offered annually.

The most popular feature of the day is undoubtedly the choral concert, conducted by Mr. G. W. Williams, a man who has a happy knack of instilling not only enthusiasm but good humour into his choir directly he takes up the baton and stands before them. Various choirs from London and the provinces take part earlier in the day in the great choral competition, on which occasion that eminent musician Dr. E. H. Turpin acts as judge.



(From a photo by Co-op. Society, Maidstone.)  
MR. W. BROOMHALL.  
(Hon. secretary of the festival.)

And thus the day wears on—never a moment when there are not half a dozen attractions going on at the same time. From time to time one catches sight of well-known faces among the crowds. George Jacob Holyoake—who, by the way, has recently celebrated his eightieth birthday with many honours—to him co-operation owes much. He has striven hard to bring it to its present successful state. It seems but the other day that I was talking to Edward Vansittart Neale and Thomas Hughes; but they will be seen no more watching the



From a photo by [Ingham, Sale.]  
MR. EDWARD OWEN GREENING.  
(Chairman of the festival.)

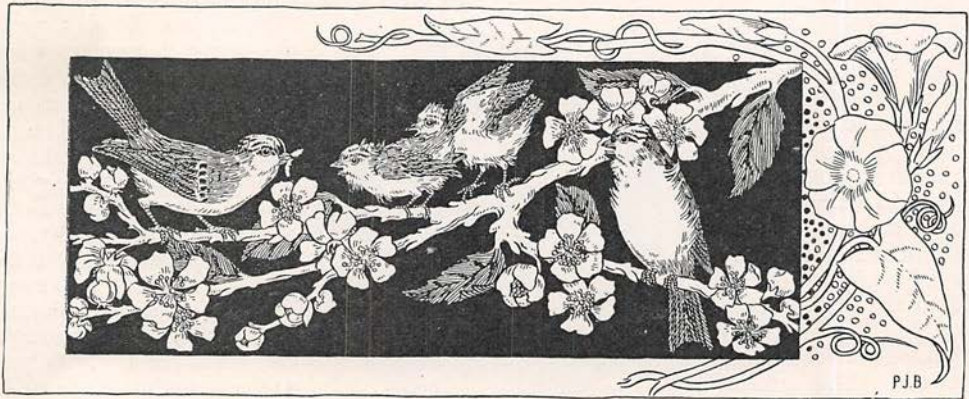
result of the work in which they took such an active interest. Yet the movement has many good workers left to carry it on. One's thoughts turn at once to Edward Owen Greening, at whose instigation these



annual festivals were first instituted. He is an enthusiast on many matters, but primarily on co-operation. To him it is the very air he breathes. He has a valuable and unswervingly courteous aide-de-camp in Mr. William Broomhall, the honorary secretary of the festival.

For these men the sun of the festival never sets. They are working in its interests from one year's end to the other, and then they start a fresh year on the same lines. But for the ordinary co-operator the festival sunset is somewhere about 11.30 p.m., when, with a still joyous, though possibly somewhat fatigued spirit, he hies him to the station, where he meets others—tens of thousands—equally desirous with himself of finding a few square inches of space in any railway carriage that chances to be going in the direction of London. Once more he will start on a long night journey into the provinces, and were it not that the first great day of the festival is always on a Saturday, and Sunday is—fortunately for

us—observed as a day of rest in this favoured land, he would appear at his work next day, apparently none the worse for his tremendous experiences of the past thirty-six hours. Ask him what sort of a day he has had and you will find he went through his programme in no perfunctory manner. He can give you an outline of the principal exhibits, can tell you the result of the choir contests and how sang the 7000. He will describe the beauty of the fountains and the gardens generally, and state an expert opinion on the respective merits of half a dozen military bands. His will be the exhilarating knowledge of the seductive switchback, and, if asked, he can probably give all the athletic items in proper sequence. He will have carried away with him a correct impression of the different public meetings and an intimate knowledge of the gist of the principal speakers' remarks. His only sorrow will be the knowledge that he must wait twelve long months before a festival day comes round again.



PJB