

## NEW YORK STATE SOCIETY.

We regretted that it was not in our power to attend the meeting of this society at Syracuse on the 27th of June. The daily expectation of Father Mathew kept us at home. The State Societies are the great basis of the temperance reformation. They are the concentration of local societies, and discuss and settle matters relative to the legislative action and general interests of the cause in the State. They are open and popular combinations, and in them we feel a peculiar interest, as the officers of the State Societies compose the American Temperance Union. This society was formerly the leading temperance organization in the land, and under Mr. Delavan, and afterwards of Elisha Taylor, pushed forward the enterprise with great power. Last year an attempt was made to revive its energies after a temporary paralysis, by giving it a new location at Syracuse and appointing a new Executive Committee. The meeting was opened by Gen. Smith, the President of the society in the following able address.

Fellow laborers:—Living as we do at a period in the history in temperance reform, when we can look back upon obstacles encountered and overcome;—upon mighty results from efforts which seemed to many to promise little, we cannot fail to see the hand of God in our enterprise.

Though the instruments employed have been very imperfect, and the means used sometimes injudicious; though we have sometimes looked for complete victory, when we scarcely escaped defeat, still a calm review of the past will show abundant cause of encouragement.

All true reforms must necessarily be slow, and especially those which aim to break down the power of interest and appetite.

The force of prejudice, the power of perverted taste and fashion, which have for ages kept the human race in bondage, are not to be snapped in a moment.

It is well for us to bear in mind, and to remember that in this world, it takes a great deal of work to do a little good. Much as yet remains to be done, before the world will be freed from the curse of intemperance. Let us reflect that much has been done, and that we are surrounded on every hand by the evidences of progress in our great and glorious cause.

The period of excitement is past, but at no time since the commencement of the reform has there been a more constant and healthy growth. The truth is silently at work in the hearts of our countrymen;—truths that have been scattered broadcast by hands that now moulder in the grave. Let us, then, continue, with unwavering diligence, to toil in this great work of humanity, for our reward, although as yet incomplete, is certain in the end.

The temperance reformation, like every other commenced with moral suasion, appeals to the intellect and the heart, based upon the moral, social and physical evils brought upon men by intemperance, have been brought before the people with convincing power. Upon moral suasion we must depend in all our direct efforts to reform the unfortunate victims of the vice of intemperance.

But all experience hitherto, has proved that for the abolition of the liquor traffic, moral suasion is powerless. One effect of the spread of light on the subject, has been to drive a majority of the men of principle once engaged in the business into other pursuits, and their places are now filled by a class of men who cannot be reached by any considerations save those of gain. Indeed, such is the natural tendency of the traffic to harden the hearts of all engaged in it, that so long as it is profitable and lawful, it will go on in spite of all that may be argued against it by the friends of temperance.

These facts seem to me very clear, namely:

1st. That intemperance will never cease while the liquor traffic continues as a beverage.

2d. That the liquor traffic can never be abolished by moral suasion; that nothing save the strong arm of the law will ever succeed in banishing the constant temptation which it everywhere affords to intemperance.

3d. That moral suasion is the only means to induce the people to sanction the law against the traffic.

4th. That a law, however stringent it might appear upon the statute book, would, under our forms of government, prove a mere dead letter unless sustained by a correct public opinion.

Experience proves that prosecuting officers and jurors are apt to act according to the feelings of those around them, and to disregard their oaths, and every other consideration except mere personal popularity.

Thousands of cases of this kind have occurred under the license laws, which are a disgrace to the name of justice, and would occur again, whatever laws might be erected, unless there existed in the tone of public sentiment an honest determination on the part of the people and their public officers to give an adequate and impartial support to the laws of the State.

The use of moral suasion is therefore still necessary to create a strong public sentiment against the traffic, and the real friends of temperance and humanity are everywhere called to employ it to the utmost extent of their power. But we should not forget, at the same time that moral suasion, as it succeeds in enlightening and awakening the public mind, must terminate in law. All places of reform have heretofore, must now, and will hereafter end in a law expressing the progress of the reform and its principles as approved by the people themselves.

The temperance reform began with pure, practical benevolence, manifested in seeking out the victims of intemperance, and extending to them the hand of charity and sympathy. It was right that it should be so, but the champions of our noble cause, while they ply their arguments and urge their appeals to save the inebriate, should not forget that there is a class who stand directly in the way of reform, and who can be reached only by law. The late no-license law of this State, although repealed in the most disgraceful manner, before it had been fairly tested, will serve at least to lead to further investigation of the subject. The evils of the liquor traffic are now passing in solemn review before the minds of the people, and the result must and will be a determination on their part to claim their rights, and to resort to effective prohibitory laws upon the subject, to protect themselves from unequal taxation, growing out of the unjust and destructive effects of the traffic, upon the best interests and happiness of almost every family in our country.

Other States are doing much in this direction, and we may be able to profit by their example and experience.

Wisconsin has taken new grounds. Her laws do not prohibit the traffic, but make the liquor-seller accountable for all damages which may follow in consequence of his business. Such a law, where a correct public sentiment prevailed, would doubtless, to some extent, answer the purpose, but it is much to be feared that a perverted public taste, and the influence of liquor-dealers and their allies, will render the law in most cases a nullity. Indeed, even apart from this hostility, there seems to be an insuperable impracticability in executing such a law. For what sum of money can be made the measure of damage to a wife, for the destruction of the reputation, the health or life of a husband? I can conceive of no pecuniary equivalent for the evils caused by intemperance, to the families of the victims, or to the community at large.

Vermont seems to have taken the true ground of prohibitory law. It is the ground taken by every government against crimes and offences against the public welfare, and in my opinion there exists no reason, in sound policy or morals, which should render the liquor traffic an exception.