

rity to the Northern Association of Literary and Mechanics Institutions," (applause) said,—This is a toast which I am sure, after the meeting we have had this morning, after the valuable and interesting report which we there heard read, and after the interest which I believe all whom I address must feel in the objects of this association, is one which I need not recommend by any arguments of my own. One thing, however, I think I cannot fail to mention as a subject of congratulation—namely, that in the age in which we live, it is useless and superfluous to dwell upon the advantages of the diffusion of education and of knowledge. (Hear, hear) The time is happily gone by when, to use the language of a great writer, "The arrogance of learning can condemn to ignorance the great body of the people." (Applause.) The time is happily gone by too, I may add, when the fears or apprehensions of one class of society can stand in the way or raise a barrier against the enlightenment and education of the great body of another. (Loud applause.) It is now universally admitted that knowledge is a blessing; and the only question which is discussed, the only thing upon which debates and difference of opinion arise, is as to the best means of effecting an object the value of which all concur in, and of promoting as widely as possible the blessings of education and of knowledge. (Loud applause.) And it is because I believe this institution, in the object it proposes to itself, and in the means which it uses for the attainment of that object, is well deserving the support of all true friends of education, that I cordially concur with those who are devoting their time and their talents and their influence to promote the object of this institution. It is on that account that I am glad to be here among you to-day, and to take my humble part with those who have done far more than I can ever pretend to do in the promotion of that object. (Loud applause.) For I believe there is nothing more true than a sentence which I find in an appeal lately issued by the council of this association in behalf of their itinerating libraries, soliciting aid for the continuance and extension of them—namely, that it is in vain to expect any marked improvement in the moral and social condition of the people, with-

out affording them the means of intellectual culture and relaxation. (Loud applause) This association does propose, does aim to extend widely those means of intellectual culture and relaxation; and, therefore, it is deserving the support, the cordial support, of all who are interested in the best interests of their fellow-countrymen. (Loud applause.) It is a gratification to know that the influence of this institution is extending year by year; and although Mr. Smith very properly endeavoured to stimulate us to increased exertion with regard to the finances of the association, by saying that it is at present falling back, and that its agency is crippled by want of funds—which I cannot believe will ultimately be the case—yet it must be a matter of sincere congratulation to us to know that the number of associations in the union is far greater now than at any previous time. I find on looking back at the reports which I was running over the other day, that in 1853 there were only 24, and that in the present year there are 84 associations in the Union. The members, too, has also increased, affording a gratifying proof, not only of the activity of the friends of education, but of the increased appreciation on the part of the people of the benefit which institutions such as this extend to them and place within their reach. I said just now I thought this association took the right means for attaining the object it proposes to itself, by endeavouring to promote the moral and intellectual welfare of the people; and I am bound to say that I also most cordially concur in the view in a passage which was read from the report, in which it was stated that the object was the withdrawing men from the tavern and the alehouse, which will be frequented whatever prohibitory laws you pass, (applause), whatever restraints you attempt to impose,—so long as the tavern and alehouse are the only resource which the working man has where he finds social relaxation and intercourse. I say I cannot but agree in the opinion so expressed, that the best way to counteract that evil influence, which we all so much deplore, but which I hope is losing its weight and diminishing in this country, is by establishing something that will be attractive to the working man, and which, while