

STOCKSBRIDGE SOCIETY.

EXHIBITION AND DEMONSTRATION LAST WEEK.

SITUATED in a beautiful valley on the eastern slope of the great Pennine Range, on the edge of the vast breezy moorlands, from which the huge populations of Sheffield, Barnsley, Rotherham, Doncaster, Derby, Leicester, &c., receive their life-giving supplies of pure water, the village of Stocksbridge has grown during the last fifty years from a few scattered farm-houses into an Urban District of 7,000 inhabitants.

In the year 1861 a few men who had heard of the success of the new movement at Rochdale, after discussing the matter in the works and at their homes, decided to form themselves into a society, under the name of The Stocksbridge Band of Hope Industrial Co-operative Society Limited, and they held their first meetings to distribute their goods at the Friendship Inn, the home of the late George Battye, one of their number. The sign over the door of the hotel still retains the "clasp hands."

They soon took a cottage, and employed a man. The first dividend was 1s. in the pound. Trade grew, and in June, 1864, the profits were £318 for the half-year, allowing a dividend of 2s. in the pound on sales. At June, 1865, there was no profit, and the reserve fund had fallen from £148 to £107. The next six years were full of trouble; opposition without and within, and bad management reduced the sales from £5,525 per half-year to £3,235, and profits to nil, and swept away the reserve fund, in addition to placing a heavy mortgage on the property.

All honour should be given to the men who stood loyally by the stores all through the storm, and finally steered it into safe waters. Disappointed with the men hitherto engaged from outside, they had appointed one of themselves as manager, and by working loyally together, they weathered the cape of adversity, and in the latter half of 1871 they entered the sea of prosperity, on whose pleasant waters they have ever since been sailing.

In the first fifteen years the sales amounted to £162,872; profits, £6,408; and the reserve fund, £203. During the last five half years the sales amounted to £170,629; profits, £23,686, after paying £7,962 for interest, writing off £1,744 for depreciation, allowing £150 for educational purposes, and placing £338 to the reserve fund. The reserve fund stands at £1,849. The

society has 2,250 members, with an average capital of £100. There are about sixty employes.

For a long time the committee have been most earnest efforts to induce the members to use only the productions of the co-operative movement as far as possible, and about three years ago they had a great struggle with them to confine the soap trade to C.W.S. production. On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of last week they were able to present the members and non-members of Stocksbridge with a splendid and convincing object lesson.

By the kindness of the C.W.S. board, an exhibition of C.W.S. productions was held in the Public Hall, Stocksbridge. It was a grand success. The room was crowded each day with interested men and women, whose remarks proved its educational value.

Mr. James Fairclough (director, C.W.S.) opened the exhibition on Thursday, with Mr. W. Conyers (president of the Stocksbridge Society) in the chair. Both gentlemen gave earnest addresses on the value of combination and the importance of loyalty.

On Friday evening the speakers were Mr. D. M'Innes (C.W.S.) and Mr. J. C. Kenworthy (North-Western Section).

On Saturday, Councillor W. F. Wardley, J.P. (Sheffield Society), Mr. Joseph Moxon (manager and secretary of the Stocksbridge Society), Mr. Swift (Ecclesall), and Mr. Riding (C.W.S.), addressed a crowded audience. Vocal and instrumental music was provided.