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TEMPERANCE PIONEERS

The "Seven Men of Preston"

WHO THEY WERE AND
WHAT THEY DID.

On September 1 the centenary of the temperance movement is to be celebrated at Preston and in all parts of the country by thanksgiving services, public meetings and a feast at which the food will be bread, cheese and water. In view of this circumstance the following graphic article about the "Seven Men" of Preston, written by Mr. W. E. Moss, the veteran missionary of Mrs. Lewis's Teetotal Mission, Lees Hall, Blackburn, will be read with deep interest.

In a few days thousands, if not millions, of people will be talking or reading about what was done by the "Seven Men of Preston" on September 1, 1832. Their names will appear in print, and the lives of two of them particularised. Further than that little is likely to be said, because even temperance historians only refer to four of the seven. Claims and statements are now being put forward locally about their religious connection, with so very little foundation in fact that what is definitely known about each of the seven should be clearly stated.

I was privileged when I came to be Mrs. Lewis's Missionary in 1888 to sit at the feet of the schoolmaster of the temperance movement, Dr F. R. Lees. The first lesson he taught me and which became part of my being, was "Always be sure of your facts. Go to any amount of trouble to find the truth."

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Consequently, when I was appointed on a committee formed in London in 1921 to adequately celebrate the greatest moral movement of the 19th century, when the centenary year dawned, I advertised for, and in all ways sought to find, the descendants of the Seven Heroes of the Temperance Reformation. So far my knowledge was limited to those of John King and Joseph Livesey. The task would have been easier, the results better, had I begun my search earlier, for I was honored with the friendship of William Livesey, who assisted his father to extend the objects of the Moderation Temperance Society, formed in Preston on March 22, 1832.

THE HISTORIC PLEDGE.

The committee consisted of 38 men. All "The Seven" were on it, except John King, who did not join till June. He was much addicted to drink, and to keep him out of danger was made captain of a district. His duty was to visit and report on the members of his area. This work brought him to Joseph Livesey's shop on Thursday, August 23. Their conversation about the members who were getting drunk on malt liquors led Joseph Livesey to write out a pledge to abstain from all that intoxicates. King had been without for a few weeks; Joseph Livesey had not tasted from January, 1831. So both appended their names to the pledge.

The society met every Tuesday in the Cockpit, but, in view of so many captains reporting drunkenness amongst the members, a special meeting was called for September 1. It broke up without coming to any decision on the matter, except to censure or expel the defaulting members. Much disappointed, Joseph Livesey told what he and John King had done a few days previously, and entreated all to do likewise. One and another consented, and taking a slip of paper from his memorandum book he wrote in pencil the pledge and names as follows:—

We agree to abstain from all liquors of an intoxicating quality, whether ale, porter, wine or ardent spirits, except as medicines.

John Gratrix, Edward Dickinson, John Brodbelt, John Smith, Joseph Livesey, David Anderton, John King.

All honour to those famous men of humble origin, but not all unlettered. They were the springs of mighty rivers flowing in all lands to-day. The following day Joseph Livesey rewrote the pledge and had it engraved. He then gave it to Joseph Dearden—the first temperance historian—from whom it passed, about 1873, to Thomas Cook, of tourist and teetotal fame. When the jubilee meetings were held in Manchester, in 1882, Mr. Cook sent it framed in steel by a special courier, with strict injunctions not to let it pass out of his sight at the meetings. It has not been in Lancashire since, but I hope to see it on view in Preston next month. I had much difficulty in tracing this pledge, but ultimately found it in the Sir George Williams Memorial Room, Russel-square, W. It can be seen now at the London headquarters of the Y.M.C.A.

REFORMED DRUNKARD AS DOORKEEPER.

I copied most of the contents of the Preston Temperance Society's minute book, 1832-52, in which no mention is made of what occurred on September 1, 1832, but the following details show that all "The Seven" took some part in committee work.

David Anderton was appointed librarian in June, 1832, to have exclusive management of new names and pledges, and in August was instructed to purchase suitable receptacles for holding the society's property. From other sources I glean that he was a schoolmaster.

John Smith was prominent in distributing tracts before the society was formed, frequently presided over the meetings, and was appointed to wait on the vicar with a copy of Dearden's "Temperance History" in 1840. He was a tallow chandler in business, and a Freeman of the borough. Born August 26, 1795; died January 1, 1851.

Edward Dickinson, a reformed drunkard, was appointed doorkeeper along with John King in July, 1832, and was a most earnest speaker at public meetings.

John Gratrix did not take a very active part. He was the last survivor of The Seven. Died March 23, 1887, in his 79th year. It is

said he took intoxicants as medicine for an internal complaint. He attended Canon-street Congregational Church, and his daughter was a teacher at Bairstow-street for nearly 50 years.

John Brodbelt was one of the young teachers at Joseph Livesey's Adult Sunday School, where it was decided on January 1, 1832, to form a Temperance Society. He urged his fellow teachers to adopt a pledge of abstinence from all intoxicating liquors, but was overruled. Otherwise he would have had the honour of first putting the teetotal pledge before the world.

SCHOOLMASTER AND CLERGYMAN.

Of a studious nature, he taught a grammar class in the adult school and was joint editor with George Toulmin of "The Youthful Teetotaler," price 1d. Six monthly parts were issued, commencing January 1, 1836. It ceased with the June number, publishing costs exceeding their resources. Articles from his pen, and those appearing later in "The Temperance Advocate," were of a high standard. After addressing meetings in the Isle of Man, he became a schoolmaster and subsequently a clergyman. Thanks to an old "Crockford" I found in the Manchester Reference Library and an old mission lad, I was able to trace him to Bentham, in Yorkshire, a few weeks ago. His grave is in the churchyard there, containing a stone bearing this inscription:—

Erected by the parishioners of Bentham in memory of John Brodbelt, curate of this church, who died July 6, 1858, aged 46 years.

"The Temperance Record" for January, 1858, has a paragraph from an advocate visiting Preston, who wrote: "During my stay I tried to learn how many of The Seven Men had kept the pledge. The following, I think, is correct: David Anderton and John Gratrix, living, but have broken their pledge; Edward Dickinson, dead, but doubtful if he kept it till death; John Smith, dead, faithful unto death; John Brodbelt, living, but doubtful; John King, Joseph Livesey, living and keeping the pledge. This information may perhaps furnish an answer some day for "Notes and Queries."

John King was born at Walton-le-Dale on December 25, 1795, not two hundred yards from Joseph Livesey's birthplace. As lads they played together. His parents were Quakers and small farmers. They allowed the Methodists to hold services in their house, which subsequently was pulled down, and now the Wesleyan Chapel is built on the site. John, on leaving school, was apprenticed to a clogger. He grew up into a powerful man, very determined and masterful; wandered from the quiet paths his parents walked in, and loved beer better than books. He was able to command good wages. This enabled him to graduate in the drunkard's school.

LANCASHIRE'S "GREATEST SON."

On joining the Temperance Society in June, 1832, he went the whole hog, and said good-bye to liquor for ever. His eagerness for others to do the same brought about the memorable meeting in Joseph's Livesey's shop on August 23, already referred to, and on September 1 he became one of "The Seven."

The fact that he was the first man in England to sign teetotal led to a number of gold and silver medals being presented to him, including one from Father Mathew. Whilst engaged as stationmaster on the Preston and Wyre Railway, a slight accident deprived him of sight. From this sad condition he was restored by an operation performed in London, where he had gone with Joseph Livesey to attend the Crystal Palace Fete in August, 1871.

He was present at the jubilee celebrations in Manchester, and rode in the Preston Guild procession the same year. After a brief illness he fell asleep on January 29, 1885, aged 90. He was laid to rest in the Southport Cemetery, and the Rev. Charles Garrett conducted the service. John King did not like a lonely life, so was married five times. I spent an hour with one of his granddaughters a few days ago.

Last but not least of "The Seven" comes Joseph Livesey, who was born at Walton-le-Dale on March 5, 1794. If ever a man from his youth upward deserved the name of re-

former and saint. Joseph Livesey was that man. Self-taught, he became the philosopher of home life and the whole duties of man. He had a passionate love for the poor, the courage to tell them their faults, to trounce their oppressors, and point out the better and fuller life.

This is not the place to detail the character and labours of Lancashire's greatest son, nor am I equal to such a glorious theme. Though the cellar of his home from the age of seven to 21 was this orphan weaver's school and college, he became a peer amongst men intellectually, one in whom there was neither meanness nor guile. He attended the Parish Church until he was being prepared for confirmation at 16. This led him to realise the importance of spiritual things and man's duty to each other. Being a keen observer, he marvelled that practice was so little in accord with profession, so he did not present himself for confirmation.

JOSEPH LIVESSEY'S COURTSHIP.

Through friends he associated with the Baptists, but was terribly disappointed with what he witnessed at an ordination dinner of one of their ministers. From then to the close of his life his religion could be summed up in a sentence: "I can best serve and love my Maker, and follow in the footsteps of Jesus, by loving and serving my fellows, even as He did."

His connection with the Baptists resulted, however, in untold blessings to himself and others. Through them he heard of a Miss Williams in Manchester, so walked 30 miles to see her, explained his errand, then walked home again, content to know he might correspond with her. He saw her twice after that before they were married, which meant over 100 miles of tramping, with a light heart to do it. The wedding took place in Liverpool on May 30, 1815, and they became one in heart, in purpose and sacrifice. Joseph Livesey could never have accomplished what he did but for her help and business ability. She was a true mother in Israel, adored by her children. She died May 19, 1869, and should occupy a prominent place in the Valhalla of Heroic Teetotal Women.

Joseph Livesey's voice, pen and purse were busy seeking to uplift humanity in a variety of ways prior to 1825, and in 1831 he became a second St. Paul, going long distances to proclaim the New Gospel of Teetotalism, writing epistles and demonstrating with barley, beer, scales and chemical appliances (even from the altars of Parish Churches) that there was more nutriment in a penny loaf than in a gallon of beer. Many who heard this famous Malt Liquor Lecture were so inspired they became giants in the temperance movement.

Never once in sickness or health after 1831 had the Father of Teetotalism any use for the poisoned cup. So to the last he fought a good fight, kept the pledge, and died honoured and beloved on September 2, 1884.

Such, as far as research reveals, were "The Seven Men of Preston." Some of them were not faithful unto death, but at least they tried. They formed a society that many good people then regarded as a bright idea of the devil, therefore blasphemous, and must end in failure. Thus it was that teetotal meetings were rarely opened with prayer. Notwithstanding fears within, and opposition without, they lit the sacred fire that will never be extinguished. It is well, therefore, that their names be held in everlasting remembrance.

A BLACKBURN CONVERT.

When the last tribute of respect had been paid at Joseph Livesey's graveside, the question was asked: "What shall we do in honour of the Father of Teetotalism?" "Raise a suitable memorial," was the reply, and £500 was at once promised towards it. This fund stood in the 1913 report at a value of £2,948. The centenary year will probably see some movement towards realising the practical desire expressed 48 years ago.

Only the birthplace of one of "The Seven" is known to exist—that of Joseph Livesey. I visited it with William Livesey on his 90th birthday, and whilst in the cellar, with its sad and glorious associations, the vow was made that some day a tablet should be placed over the lintel of the front door, that all who passed by might know what a great soul was born there.

Years later, when the property came on the market, I purchased it, and a bronze tablet was affixed, and Mrs. Lewis unveiled it on March 10, 1923.

All movements have their unknown heroes and heroines. Realising this, it is only just that I should conclude with Joseph Livesey's own comments, in 1868, on "The Seven" and their successors.

"These, then, were 'The Seven Men' so often referred to. It is, however, but justice to say that though their signing gave a great impetus to the cause, there were many others who did a great deal more to forward its success than these 'Seven.' Amongst those who really deserve to be called the Men of Preston for their early devotion to this noble enterprise, I may mention the following: James Teare, Edward Grubb, Thomas Swindlehurst, William Haworth ('Slender Billy'), James Broughton, Henry Anderton, Henry Bradley (secretary), Joseph Richardson, Richard Turner ('Dick'), William Gregory, Jonathan Simpson, Robert Jolly, George Cartwright, Joseph Dearden, John Bimson, Thomas Osbaldeston, John Barton, Robert Charnley, Thomas Walmsley, James Stephenson, George Toulmin, Samuel Smalley, John Waller, Miles Pennington, John Brade, and some others.

"They were devoted to the cause—visitors, tract distributors, speakers; with two or three exceptions all were working men: about half of them reformed drunkards."

Some of these men, with Joseph Livesey, walked up King-street, Blackburn, on Easter Monday, 1835. They passed by a cellar facing Montague-street in which lived a young man who had formerly been a scholar in Joseph Livesey's Night School, but had passed into the captivity of strong drink. That night he went to hear these men in the theatre, signed the pledge, and about four months later was employed by Joseph Livesey to blaze the trail of teetotalism anywhere and everywhere. In that task none was more enthusiastic and successful, none more faithful unto death than the Man of Blackburn, Thomas Whittaker, the first paid teetotal missionary

"Let us now praise famous men."