

LV. TEMPERANCE ORGANIZATIONS.

The Sons of Temperance have the distinction of being the first secret organization established in Marshall county. The writer has before him the records of Plymouth Division No.107, Sons of Temperance. On the first page is this entry:

"Record of Plymouth Division, No. 107, Sons of Temperance, October 15, 1847. Love, Purity and Fidelity. H. B. Pershing, R. S."

At that time and for several years later the Sons. of Temperance were pretty much the whole thing in Plymouth, and in fact in the entire county, as it took men from every part of the county into its membership, there being no other organizations of the order in any other part of the county. Neither the Masons nor the Odd Fellows had an organization in the county then, and none of the fraternal organizations now so numerous all over the country had an existence at that time, nor were they even thought of. But few more than 100 divisions had been organized in Indiana prior to the organization of the division in Plymouth. It is likely, therefore, that the organization of the Sons of Temperance in this, state took place about 1846.

The object of the order was to promote temperance, but, being a secret order, it became more of a social organization or club than otherwise, and many, in fact most of those who were charter members, were temperate men who were not in the habit of using spirituous liquors as a beverage or otherwise. Many of those who drank moderately, and even to excess, kept right on after being initiated, just the same as if nothing had happened. In the minutes of December 11, 1847, the following appears:

"On motion that the case of Brothers M. Pomeroy and M. L. Sutphen in relation to drinking cider be indefinitely postponed, which was agreed to unanimously, on account of ignorance in the matter ."

At first the place of meeting was in the upper room in the house of Frank Daws, which stood on the southeast corner of Center and Garro streets. Frank Daws was a wagon maker and had a shop on his lot about where John W. Parks' law office now stands.

The committee appointed to procure a suitable room made the following report October 23, 1847: "On motion of Brother Charles Crocker a select committee of three was appointed to select a room for the use of this division and furnish the same, and to report the amount necessary this evening." The committee reported, recommending the renting of the upper story of Mr. Daws wagon shop at \$10 a year, and that it would cost \$30 to furnish and put it in order for use, which was agreed to.

November 20, 1847, the committee reported the room completed and in the division moved In Charles Crocker, named above, at that time had charge of the old iron forge at Sligo, at the outlet of Twin Lakes. After the discovery of gold in California he went about 1850, overland to that Eldorado; assisted in building the Union Pacific railroad, and died a number of years ago a multi-millionaire, one of the richest men on the Pacific coast. He seems from the records to have been a very active member of the order, nearly always filling some office during his connection with it. At one of the, meetings the following entry appears:

"Brother Crocker was filled the sum of 12 1/2 cents for not having his part committed to memory."

He also introduced a resolution which was adopted that they sincerely lament the fact that the division had in several instances acted contrary to the letter of the constitution, and that they would not in the future be governed by any precedent thus established.

He also introduced a lengthy preamble and resolution thanking Miss Matthews, of South Bend, for presenting the division "a very neat and appropriate bookmark elegantly embroidered, thereby evincing unusual sympathy and interest for one of her age in the cause in which we are united to advance."

There was another division at Plymouth at that time called Marshall Division N0.203. They did not seem to work in harmony and several efforts were made to unite the two divisions. Finally a joint committee was appointed to perfect a union, and May 3, 1850, reported that they met and placed thirty-four ballots in a hat, thirty-two blank, and one with Marshall division on it and one with Plymouth. These were placed in the hands of Brother Fairchilds, and that he was told to draw one ballot at a time from the hat until he drew one with the name of Plymouth or Marshall division upon it. He drew, and the result of the first draw was favorable to Plymouth. Thereupon the necessary proceedings were had to consolidate both into Plymouth Division No.107, and thereafter harmony prevailed.

There was also at Plymouth an organization called. "Invincible Union" No. ---, Daughters of Temperance, and also an organization of the Cadets. of Temperance. There was also a public organization known as the "Washingtonians," which held public meetings weekly, or whenever some temperance speaker came along and wished to address the people on that subject. For a time during the year 1851 the temperance question was the one which occupied the attention of the people of Plymouth more than any other. There was no particular reason for this, as there were only two saloons in Plymouth at the time and there was not more drinking than might be expected in a new town like Plymouth then was. In July of 1851 the editor of the Pilot said :

" An evidence that Plymouth will one day be the abode of virtue and wisdom is the absence of all intoxicating drinks, which law has been carried into effect by some of its worthy citizens. Their names shall shine with resplendent luster in the archives of immortality! Blessed spirits ! Where do they dwell! We have wreathes for them! Having leaped this formidable barrier and killed the seven-headed monster, Plymouth shall rise from her weeping couch and assume the garb of purity and brightness !"

That did not last long and the temperance advocates kept right on "storming the citadel of the rum power" just the same as if Plymouth had not "risen from her weeping couch and assisted the garb of purity and brightness !"

Local Option.

At the April election in 1851 there was a local option liquor law which permitted voters to vote whether there should be license or no license. At that election the question of licensing liquor dealers in Center township was voted upon and resulted as follows: Against license, 116; in favor of license and blanks, 65; majority against license, 51.

This was the vote that made Plymouth a "dry town," that inspired the editor of the Pilot to state in the above paragraph so eloquently in regard to "the absence of all intoxicating drinks, which law had been carried into effect by some of its worthy citizens." This local option law,

however, proved to be unsatisfactory, and in 1853 the legislature passed a law putting the sale of all liquors, and that only for medicinal purposes, upon the prescription of a practicing physician, in the hands of a county agent. That necessarily put the temperance organization out of business, as the state had legalized its sale and authorized the appointment of an agent whose business was to sell liquors for the state as provided by the law. It was soon found, however, that there was as much drunkenness and as much liquor drunk as at any period previous to that time. Those who drank, and many who did not, supplied themselves with bottles and little brown jugs and hid them away in their cellars and garrets, where they had more frequent access to it than they had when it was regularly on sale as provided by law, and there was fully as much inebriation, if not more, than previously, and so it came to pass that the temperance advocates kept right on "storming the citadel of the rum power," just the same as if Plymouth had not "risen from her weeping couch and assumed the garb of purity and brightness."

County Agent.

The agent for the sale of liquors in Marshall county was William E. Thompson, son of John L. Thompson, who was afterwards sheriff of the county. He kept his liquor store in the second story of a wagon shop that stood on the lot Center street about where William Everly's dwelling house now stands. He stocked up in good shape and had all kinds of liquors supposed to be necessary for "all the ills that flesh is heir to," including "snake bites !" He was an honest, straightforward, kind-hearted man, who wished to live in peace with all men, and it was hard for him to refuse any of his friends a little something for the stomach's sake," and it was sometimes thought that an occasional half-pint bottle went out without the, required physician's prescription certificate! Be that as it may, those who wanted it never failed, by hook or by crook, to get it in some way or other. The consequence was that the state's record in conducting the saloon business proved to be worse than the saloon itself.

In 1855 the legislature passed an act which was prohibitory in its nature. The first section provided that no person should, manufacture, keep for sale, or sell any intoxicating liquors, except such persons as were licensed by the state to manufacture and sell to authorized agents of the county, and then only for medicinal purposes. The third section provided as follows: "That no person in this state shall drink any whisky, beer, ale or porter as a beverage, and in no instance except as a medicine." Shortly after the act was passed the constitutionality of the law was taken before the supreme court on a writ of habeas corpus, and that court, in an elaborate opinion by Judge Perkins, declared the act unconstitutional for reasons which they set out in full in their opinion in *Herman vs. The State*, 1855.

Praying Bands - Blue Ribbon. The temperance organizations kept on trying to do something to eradicate the evil of intemperance. Finally over in Ohio, in the early '70s, the women organized what they called praying bands. They visited the saloons wherever they found them, and kneeling down on the floors sang and prayed for the saloonkeepers and those who were present. The women

of Plymouth, Bourbon, and perhaps some other places in the county caught the inspiration and also organized praying bands who visited the saloons, but the excitement soon died away and no good came of it. This was followed by the blue ribbon excitement, which appealed to the individual to sign the pledge, quit drinking, and don the blue ribbon. The craze swept over the country like a prairie fire before a high wind. But like everything born of excitement, it soon spent its force and disappeared like the morning mist before the rising sun. Upon the ruins of all these organizations sprang up the Women's Christian Temperance Union, devoted primarily to the cause of temperance, which still maintains organizations in most of the county seats and larger towns. It is a conservative organization, its work being mostly on educational lines. It has never taken part in any spasmodic efforts to suppress the liquor traffic, its members knowing from past experience that such efforts would be futile.

At every session of the legislature since the adoption of the new constitution in 1850 there has been more or less legislation on the liquor question introduced and passed, none of which has been sufficiently satisfactory to "let well enough alone." What was known as the "Baxter Bill," which created much excitement when it was passed in 1873, was at the next session modified and finally repealed. It provided among other things that the saloonkeeper should file with his application for license the petition of a majority of the voters at the last election in the township or ward where he desired to sell, asking that he be granted license. During the continuance of this law various ways were devised by which the law could be evaded, and as no one was enough interested to appear before the board of commissioners and point out these evasions, licenses were granted the same as if no petitions had been filed. In Plymouth that year the town was merged into a city, and both parties united on a citizens city ticket, in which the saloonkeepers heartily concurred. The consequence was the friends of the saloons refrained from voting, as there was no politics in the election, so that there was not more than half the total vote polled, which made it comparatively easy for the applicants for license to get a majority of the total vote as indicated by the vote polled.

The Nicholson bill then followed, and with slight amendments has , been in force ever since. This law, if the state continues to legalize the sale of liquors by issuing license authorizing its sale, is probably .as good a law as the legislature can be induced to pass for some time to come.