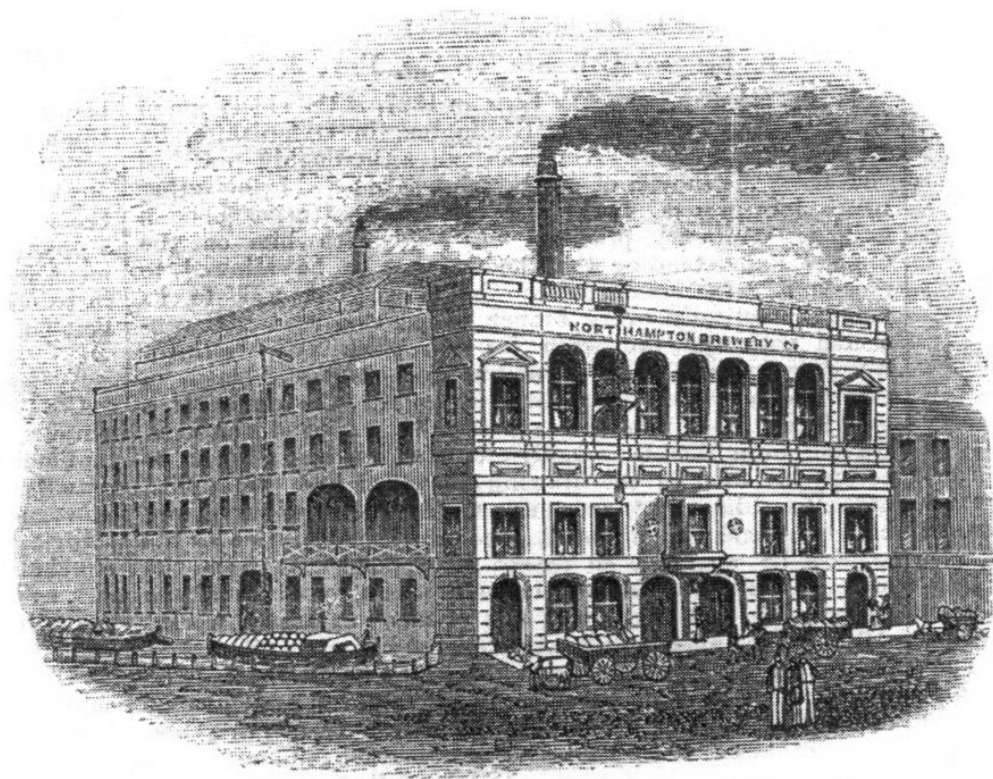


THE NORTHAMPTON BREWERY COMPANY

Not far from very centre of England, in the midst of the rich plains that form the glory of those counties that are always especially alluded to by hunting men as the "shires," and on the great high road from the metropolis to the northern and north-western towns of the kingdom, Northampton has from very early times occupied a prominent place in our annals. Standing on the line of the Watling Street, it was naturally a Roman station, though not perhaps so important a one as the neighbouring Towcester. Something more than nine hundred and fifty years ago the Saxons under King Edward had to defend themselves at Towcester from an attack made by the Danes at Northampton. In the reign of King John it was the scene of the death of Prince Arthur, so eloquently, and pathetically described by our greatest dramatist. During the Wars of the Roses, Northampton had to undergo more than its fair share of the troubles of the time, being the very centre of most of the struggles of the contending factions, and the actual scene of the Earl of Warwick's great victory over the Lancastrians in 1460, after which Henry VI. was taken prisoner by the haughty King-Maker, and Edward IV. proclaimed king. Again, during the wars of the Commonwealth, Northampton stood a famous siege, but since then its history has been peaceful and uneventful but prosperous. For many years past the staple industry of Northampton has been boot-making, and so well has this trade caused the town to flourish that whereas in 1851 the population was but 26,657, this had increased in 1871 to 45,080, showing the really remarkable growth for an inland and not purely manufacturing town of as nearly as possible seventy per cent. in the twenty years, while at the present moment it is estimated that the population of the town is little if at all short of fifty thousand.

This rapid growth, while mainly attributable to the extension of one trade, has in turn reacted on the other industries of the place, and in consequence Northampton must be looked on as an eminently flourishing town. This is indeed as well, for although its surroundings are both pretty and salubrious, it is doubtful whether its most enthusiastic admirer would call the town itself architecturally beautiful. Its most attractive buildings are indeed of commercial character, and among these a high place must be assigned to the premises of the Northampton Brewery Company. Nor is this fact altogether surprising. It has almost passed into a proverb that the favourite occupations of bootmakers are to talk politics and to drink beer, and certainly they do both in Northampton - the first hotly, the second deeply. The speedy increase in the number of bootmakers, then, naturally explains what would otherwise seem the almost abnormally sudden leap into importance of the Northampton Brewery Company. Unlike most of the large breweries of London and of all parts of the provinces, excepting Burton in late years, this establishment has had no long and struggling youth, during which its business has grown gradually and slowly from insignificance to greatness, for not twenty years have elapsed since Messrs. Phillips Brothers, who had only a short time previously founded a small brewery in Stony Stratford, came over to Northampton with a view of making arrangements for the opening of an agency, but finding the premises in Bridge-street vacant, and considering them eminently suitable for a brewery, determined to take them, and establish their headquarters in Northampton.

As we have already remarked, the business increased with unexampled rapidity, and the name and beers of Phillips Brothers became familiar throughout the



VIEW OF THE BREWERY BUILDINGS.

country. But with something of that vaulting ambition which sometimes o'erleaps itself, the heads of the firm could not remain satisfied with local form, and not only established agencies in London and far distant provincial towns, but opened a branch brewery in Burton on a large scale. The Burton premises have, however, no sort of connection with our present subject, and we may therefore dismiss them in a short sentence of explanation. In 1868 the present sole proprietor of the brewery, Mr. S.L. Seckham, became a sleeping partner, and when five years later circumstances made a dissolution of partnership desirable, he purchased the entire property of the firm; but, with that sound discretion which is not only, as the proverb has it, the better part of valour, but is often the soundest courage, immediately resold the Burton brewery to Messrs. Truman, Hanbury, Buxton, and Co., and some of our readers will doubtless remember that we fully described this building some months ago in our the article on the Brick-lane firm.

Under Mr. Seckham's proprietorship many changes and improvements have been made in the arrangements of the premises in Bridge-street, with the desired and expected result of largely increasing the business, until the Northampton Brewery may fairly be allowed to take rank as one of the very largest houses of the kind in the kingdom, the property of one man; indeed, the only "single-handed" brewery we have ever seen that can compare with this in importance is that of Mr. Agg-Gardner, M.P., at Cheltenham. Be it understood that we do not claim to speak with absolute authority on this point, but so far as a somewhat extensive acquaintance with the representative breweries of the United Kingdom enables us to judge, we can safely claim the one under notice as the largest to be found in England, which is at the same time less than twenty years of age, and the property of one man. Quitting introduction, we will at once enter the brewery, and describing what we see, enable our readers to judge for themselves the capacities of the Northampton Brewery.

The premises have an extensive frontage to Bridge-street, which is not only one of the most important thoroughfares in Northampton, but is peculiarly devoted to the manufacture of beer, no less than three of the four principal breweries of the town being located here. Indeed, some enthusiastic antiquaries have asserted that on the ground now covered by Bridge-Street, beer was brewed many centuries ago by shrewd agriculturists, who discovered the merits of the water running underneath. Be this as it may, it is certain that the horse-breeders, who from time immemorial have peopled this great grazing county, and whose fame is to this day in the Horse Market, the Mare Fair, and other similar names, were always more dependent on the "common brewer" for their beverage than were the farmers in more purely arable districts. But, as is usually the case, demand has created supply, and now Northampton grows not a little barley which will vie with the finest samples of the not far distant but more easterly counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. But to return. Exteriorly the brewery is a noble and lofty range of buildings of stone and brick. On entering, the visitor finds himself in an excellently appointed and very handsome set of offices, the ceiling of which is supported by well-proportioned Corinthian pillars. A number of clerks are here busily engaged in entering the orders, deliveries, and other actual business of the firm. At the end of the oak counter are a couple of beer engines from which intending customers may test the output of the brewery. Here, on market days, may always be seen a goodly gathering of country clients - farmers and others - who are made welcome to unlimited draughts of malt, as well to a traditional luncheon. Beyond may be caught a glimpse of the stores and yards, but, reserving our notice of these for the present, we ascend a broad flight of stairs to the first floor, where is another clerk's office of considerable dimensions - the room devoted to Mr. Smedley, the general indoor manager and confidential assistant, to whose urbane and intelligent courtesy we must express our indebtedness for the really complete manner in which we were enabled to explore every department of the establishment, and the private room of the head of the firm. Immediately behind, and almost within reach of these offices, is the brewery proper. Indeed, one of the most marked peculiarities of the Northampton Brewery Company is the ingenious manner in which convenience has been studied, and every effort has been made to bring each portion of the brewery within reach of all others, while still keeping the various departments

distinct. The general management of the brewery and the outdoor departments devolves on Mr. Frank Phillips, a brother of the late partners, who is responsible for its general good management and supervises the purchase of the various materials required in the brewery.

Ascending at once to the topmost floor of the brewery, we find a malt-room, in which are kept goodly stores of malt in bags, ready for crushing; and, adjoining this, is a gallery leading from the main to a branch building, in which is carried on the chief malting. This building, or rather the portion devoted to malting, consists of three floors. Our readers must be so familiar with the whole theoretical and practical particulars of the process of germinating the barley, that it will be unnecessary to dilate learnedly on the sprouting of the *plumula*, the conversion of the starch of the barley, or even the various stages of steeping, couching, and drying, to say nothing of gauging, when the Exciseman pays his unwelcome visit. Suffice is to remark that the steeping-cisterns, the kilns, the gypsum floors, the screens, and, in short, everything used or demanded in the operation, are perfect of the kind. These three malting-floors, with an additional building away from the brewery, render Mr. Seckham practically independent of the maltster, save possibly at that period in the autumn just before the commencement of the new maltings, when an increased consumption has reduced the stock in hand to an unexpectedly low point.

Having followed the barley from its arrival in the building until it is finally deposited in bags ready for crushing, we necessarily find ourselves once more in the store already alluded to, when we explore the capacious bins dedicated to the same purpose as the bags, and holding together many thousands of quarters of malt. From these bins the malt is easily conveyed to the mill, in which it is crushed ready for use, previous to which, however, it is carefully measured by an ingenious self-registering apparatus for that purpose, and thence is conveyed - always be it understood, by machinery worked by steam power - to the grist cases over the tuns.

There are at present two mash tuns, though some changes are in progress, the object of which is to make room for the erection of a third, but those of our readers who are practically acquainted with the subject will be able to form a fair idea of the resources of the brewery when they learn that the mash tuns at present in exist-

tence are respectively fifty quarters and thirty quarters, making together an eighty-quarter plant, and that these are kept at work almost day and night all the year round. The tuns are fitted with Conron's rakes,¹ and above them, on the very roof of the building, are the hot and cold water cisterns, holding respectively 6,000 and 23,400 gallons. From the tuns the "wort" is run into the coppers on the floor below, where it is boiled with the hops. There are three of these, two of one hundred barrels each and one of ninety barrels. These are all fitted with a stirring apparatus, to prevent hops settling at the bottom. It should be mentioned here that this being a steam-power brewery, every possible operation is performed by the aid of steam, among others that of boiling the water in the hot cisterns, the coppers, etc. To obviate the inconvenience that would otherwise be caused by great heat resulting from the number of steam-pipes pervading the building in every direction, an excellent plan, which we have never seen in any other brewery, has been adopted, of covering all the iron work with a peculiar kind of compost, which is so perfect a non-conductor of heat that the hand can be placed without the slightest inconvenience on pipes as large round as a man's thighs, through which the steam is rushing with force sufficient to boil the water in the cisterns. Not only does this compost prevent the radiation of heat, and thereby economise fuel, but by preventing oxidation tends to the preservation of the iron work, and from what we saw of its uses in Northampton we cordially recommend its adoption by brewers generally.

On the same floor as the hop back is the brewer's room where the results of every brewing are carefully watched and tested by the head brewer Mr. Jones and his assistant Mr. Symonds, two officials to whose skill Mr. Seckham attributes much of the popularity of the various beers of the "N.B.C.," as the Northampton Brewery Company are familiarly called in the county. The hop backs being fitted with perforated floors through which the wort runs off to the coolers, the hops are transferred to the hop-press in which may they are pressed dry and then sold for various purposes, too often we fear for fuel, though we trust no long time will elapse before some more profitable use is found for them, as we are confident that among other things they might be utilised for making brown paper.

Following the beer to the coolers we find four refrigerators in use; one of the old-fashioned horizontal kind,

which however effectively it may have done its work, occasioned a sad waste of room; the three new ones are all Lawrence's patent, of which we have frequently had to speak in the highest terms.² These will each cool from 60 to 70 barrels per hour. The wort from these is carried into the fermenting "squares," and "rounds," there being ten of the former and four of the latter with an aggregate capacity 1250 barrels. These are all fitted up with attenuators, and are otherwise of the most approved manufacture. The next stage in the manufacture of beer as our readers are aware is the transfer of the liquor, now for the first time dignified with the name of beer, to the cleansing rooms, and here the inquirer will discover that two methods of brewing are in full operation, as, while for mild ale and stout the "skimming" process which we have on a previous occasion designated the "natural method," is adopted, for bitter and other ales of what is now called a Burton character the Burton system of "Unions" is employed. Both have been fully described in these columns, and both have their special advantages. It must never be forgotten that by "skimming" the beer is kept in sight throughout the entire process of cleansing, and any mishap can be remedied at once, while, under the union system, although the operation may be in some respects more perfect, it is, on the other hand, more tedious and more delicate, and any little defect may spoil the product of a heavy brew. In both cases the yeast is passed into the yeast backs, where, instead of being sold with much beer in it, as was the case of old, it is subjected to the action of one of Needham and Kite's excellent yeast presses, which reduces it to a hard, perfectly dry mass. There are ten cleansing squares, and in the union room, six "sets," each consisting of fourteen five-barrel casks, making an aggregate of 15,120 gallons. The mashtuns, backs, squares, and rounds, are all of wood, and, it need not be added, scrupulously clean, while the floorings throughout this portion of the new brewery is of asphalt. From the cleansing squares the beer is racked at once into casks for delivery, but before descending to the ground-floor, where this final operation is performed, we may hastily set down one or two noteworthy items about the upper floors.

Firstly, then, it worth remembering that the premises were originally intended for very different purposes from those to which they are now applied; and although, as will be seen from the accompanying illustration, they have an imposing elevation, and afford ample space,

they were in many respects most inconvenient, even when Mr. Seckham became the sole proprietor. Thanks, however, to that gentleman's architectural skill - of which more anon - these have all been remedied, and there is, probably, not to be found in all England a brewery, the various parts of which communicate so readily. So perfect is now the arrangement, that the managers and the head brewer can exercise the completest supervision over the entire establishments, while only they can easily tell the exact condition of affairs in any department. It is worth remarking, too, that from the upper floors of the brewery can be obtained from different windows an almost perfect view of the town of Northampton, the prospect embracing also a wide expanse of the country beyond, while at the spectator's feet runs the River Nene, which, as will presently be seen, is an important factor in the prosperity of the brewery. It will be sufficient merely to mention that on the second floor is a fitting-room in which engineers, smiths, and other artificers perform any work required in the building without delay, and that every operation of the brewery is subjected daily to an exhaustive system of book keeping which enables the head of the firm to check his expenditure almost from hour to hour, and to interpose at once in the event of any error either in the brewery or any other outlay. Now, descending once more to the ground floor, and again passing through the offices, we are at once in the boiler-shed. Here are four large Cornish boilers, all fitted with patent furnaces of modern construction, and affording abundance of boiler power for all the varied operations of the brewery. Beyond is the engine-room with two engines, the one a vertical of 8 horse-power, and the other a horizontal of 12 horse-power. Under the yard is an excellent well, furnishing an abundant supply of water, which, being remarkably rich in sulphates and carbonates, is invaluable for brewing, while for the ordinary purposes of the brewery the town water is used. The racking-room, on the level of the yard, is most conveniently situated for the delivery of goods, for while on the one side drays can be directly loaded and sent away with beer for the town and vicinity, on the other side a pair of wide doors open on to a cutting from the river, where barges lie in quietness to receive their loads for more distant customers of the brewery, and for its various agencies, of which it possess about a score, at Rugby, Coventry, Leicester, Peterborough, Daventry, Kingscliffe, Harrow, Hitchin, Kettering, Deddington, Leighton-Buzzard, Market-Harborough, Wellingborough, Hinckley,

Wansford, Stony Stratford, Thrapston, St. Alban's, Oxford, and other places. These agencies, it may be mentioned here, are all under the immediate control of the Northampton house, where all accounts are made out, the agents having to send in their account of sales, etc., every day, and to attend at the chief office once a month in order to have their accounts thoroughly examined. The result of this excellent system is that the percentage of bad debts at the agencies is remarkably small, while their cost averages less than the ordinary commission of a traveller. The agents, indeed, being without the independence so often very unwisely given them, might be more properly described as local travellers with offices.

The sight of the barges has, however, led us away from our more immediate purpose, the inspection of the stores. These are very commodious and lofty, being designed for the days of vats, of which a few are still retained, more, however, as mementoes of the past than for any present use, for the days of vating, save in most exceptional cases, have gone never to return. Improved systems of brewing cause beers to mature in a period that would have astonished our grandfathers, and old ales are now drunk that have been brewed in less time than was of old required to make the sweetest and mildest ale even moderately drinkable, and men of the time of the Whitbreads, the Meux's, and the Calverts who wasted fortunes in building vats each larger than the other would almost turn in their graves could they learn that their successors have their beers fit for consumption in less time than it took to fill their gigantic tuns. The consequence of this change is that brewers keep much smaller quantities of beer in stock than formerly, especially is this the case with those, a large proportion of whose trade is in stout and mild sweet ales. Northampton the demand is principally for beers of the latter character, and consequently, so far from keeping this on hand, Mr. Seckham's great difficulty is to make the supply keep pace with the demand. As, however, he does a very large business also in bitter, and what for convenience' sake, we may call Burton ales, those that are of a Burton character, a considerable amount of storage room is required, and an imposing array of barrels, kilderkins, and firkins fills the capacious stores. As a visitor to the Rhone, the Garonne, or the Rhine, to the banks of the blue Moselle, to Epervay, to Cadiz, or to Oporto, would consider his journey but wasted did he neglect to taste the wine of the country, so

the visitor to a brewery would be ashamed of himself, and would certainly offend his Amphitryon did he neglect to sample the various brewings, and we are free to confess that in this particular at least we were not remiss at Northampton. The result, was in our judgment, was eminently satisfactory. Throughout all the beers there ran a distinctive characters which was most agreeable in flavour, and at the same time denoted excellent quality. It was impossible to mistake the genuine flavour of malt and hops, and as impossible also to ignore the excellence of the brewings. Some of the milder ales were perhaps rather too sweet for a London palate, but this is a mere matter of habit, and a Northampton man would doubtlessly object even more strongly to some of the most famous London brewings, and local character is never to be despised in beer. But we can speak in terms of unreserved praise of three of the beers we tasted; the "A K.," a light dinner ale, clean in the mouth, and slightly bitter; the XXXX mild ale, and the extra stout. This last is full of body, and would receive favourable judgment from the most experienced connoisseur of London stout.

Leaving the stores, we wended our way to the stables, evidently and deservedly a department in which Mr. Seckham takes a warm interest and feels considerable pride. Nor need this be wondered at, for the firm employs some sixty horses, among which are many of the finest specimens of the dray horse we have ever seen, and we can readily believe Mr. Seckham's assurance that some of them have cost him upwards of a hundred and twenty guineas each. One in particular, to which we were introduced with an emphatic, "There the finest horse in Northampton," impressed us most strongly with an opinion that the boast might have included a much wider radius. The stables are not unworthy of the animals inhabiting them, but Mr. Seckham is not satisfied, and informed us that it is his intention to make certain alterations and additions by which he will be enabled to give every horse a loose box. This most desirable and humane intention has been rendered practicable by the recent acquisition of a large plot of additional ground in the yard where the stables are situated. In this yard are also the dray sheds, the harness lofts, and the painters' shops, where are painted the signboards for the numerous houses vending the "N.B.C." ales. And here let remark in parenthesis, that these three letters form an appendage in every case to the trade mark shown in our illustration, a red



star with a white garter. Of such houses between ninety and hundred are "tied." This is, it must be admitted, a large number, when it is remembered how short a time comparatively the brewery has been established, and the competition that always exists among provincial brewers when houses within their district are in the market. But Mr. Seckham evidently possess too much energy and determination to be easily defeated when he has set his mind upon an object. Many of our readers are aware that a large proportion of provincial brewers are also wine and spirit merchants, and Mr. Seckham, finding that this fact placed him at a disadvantage, and that, in fact, the possession of a good licensed house benefited his wine and spirit-selling neighbour even more than it did himself, who only supplied the beer, has recently added these important branches to his trade.

For this business he has taken entirely distinct premises, but also situated in Bridge-street, on the opposite side of the thoroughfare, where he has most commodious cellars and offices, under the present management of his brother-in-law, Captain W.W. Cragg, a gentleman who is jointly interested in this department, and who before he obtained his commission took his degree of M.A. at Oxford, and is now a student in the Middle Temple. It must be said that at least his present duties will qualify him, when he assumes his wig and gown, to perform to general satisfaction the most important function devolving on the junior member of a circuit - that of selecting the wines for the bar mess.

All this time it will be noticed we have said nothing of some of the most important adjuncts of a large brewery, and indeed we ourselves, at one part of our tour of inspection, when we thought we had mastered the ground-plan of the brewery, had observed where it was bounded by water, where by Bridge-Street and where by another thoroughfare, began to wonder where the empty casks came from. We had seen not only no sign of a

cooperage, but no sign even of washing casks - "one of those things no brewery can do without." A passing allusion to the yard had not been noticed, or rather had been supposed to refer to that in which stables were situated. But the mystery was soon explained when our guide led the way to a thoroughfare called Weston-street, apparently some considerable distance from the brewery, and after pointing out some extensive maltings belonging to the brewery, entered the "General Yard."

Here the first object to strike the eye was a tall shaft springing from the ground to a considerable height, and telling at once of works of no small importance carried on at its base to require so imposing an erection to carry away the smoke from the furnaces. The yard itself is of the most extensive and complete character, covering a really considerable area. Its most important part is the cooperage, in which every cask used by the firm is made, and, when occasion requires, repaired. Besides the cooperage proper, which alone employs a considerable number of hands, and the repairing shop, there are here the branding room, in every cask stamped by one of Geoghan's patent branding machines, with the name of the brewery and its own distinctive mark, by which all its wanderings can ever afterwards be traced, and the washing yard to which are at once sent all casks returned to the brewery, where they are subjected to a most elaborate system of cleansing - first being brushed out, then rinsed with boiling water, finally purified with hot air by means of a fan. Then there is long range of shops, each with its distinctive uses. The sawing shop with circular and vertical saws, all worked, as, indeed, is nearly everything else in the yard, by steam-power, for the production of which there are a powerful engine and boilers, the shop in which the shives or wooden bungs are made, the wheel-wrights', the blacksmiths', the carpenters' and painters' shops. So perfect indeed in all its appliances is this yard, and so thoroughly self-contained and independent of the outside world does it render the brewery, that, not only are the horses in the home stables here shod and otherwise attended to, but farriers are sent hence to the various agencies. In the wheelwrights' shops are built the drays, which are painted in the next compartment, where also the casks receive the band of blue which distinguishes all the barrels of the Northampton Brewery Company. On an upper floor are the hay and corn stores, with chaff-cutting machines constantly at work. There are saddlers' rooms, gasfitters, and in fact a whole colony of artificers. At first, it would

seem that the only drawback to this yard is its distance from the main brewery buildings, but it soon becomes apparent that there is no cause for regret on this score. Not only does a siding from the railway, giving direct communication with the main lines of the London and North-Western and Midland systems, run entirely across the yard, but it is skirted by the River Nene, and thus direct water communication is afforded with the brewery, which is much more easily reached by water than by land, being, indeed, only a few yards away. Thus throughout the day the barges belonging to the firm are continually passing and repassing, bringing empty casks to be washed, taking away clean ones to be filled with beer, carrying loads of provender to the horse stables, or departing on longer journeys with heavier and more important cargoes; indeed, not even in Burton itself, where the highways are given up without stint to the brewers locomotives, is there a yard more conveniently situated or more abundantly furnished with means of transport, either by road or rail, by land or water, than this we have been endeavouring to describe at Northampton. We have said enough to show that the "N.B.C." is one of the representative breweries of England, and is fairly entitled to its place in our columns. As may easily be believed, it furnishes a considerable amount of employment, a large number of persons being engaged at the brewery and the various agencies, as clerks, brewers, coopers, carmen, cellar-men, storekeepers, mechanics, and artisans, as heads of departments, agents, and travellers, while the annual output of the brewery amounts to upwards of 50,000 barrels, representing a yearly trading of probably not far short of £130,000. It is worth noting, too, that this trade, large as it is, might have been even larger had not Mr. Seckham "disestablished and disendowed" some of the more distant agencies, believing it to be wiser, safer, and, in the end, more profitable, to devote himself to expanding and fostering the home connection, which can, of course, be carried on at a smaller outlay for carriage, and with less risk of bad debts and other undesirable results. With this mention of the name of the proprietor of the brewery we may take leave of the matériel, and devote what space remains at our disposal to a brief biographical notice of

S. LIPSCOMBE SECKHAM, Esq., J.P.

This gentleman, who was born in 1827, is the eldest son of the late Mr. Seckham, of Kidlington, in Oxfordshire,



S. LIPSCOMBE SECKHAM, ESQ., J.P.
(OF THE NORTHAMPTON BREWERY COMPANY.)

by Harriet, his wife. Having received a thoroughly practical education, the subject of our sketch was articulated by his father to the late Messrs. Locke and Nesham, extensive London builders. A heavy premium was paid with him on the distinct understanding that he was not to be allowed to remain a mere ornament of the office, but was to be taught practically every branch of the various trades connected with the profession for which he was destined. Accordingly, for a certain period he worked at the bench in the carpenter's shop; he learned practically the duties of a bricklayer, and practised successfully as a stonemason. Having been thus thoroughly grounded, he was allowed to occupy his stool in the drawing office, and here he applied himself so diligently to mastering the difficulties of surveying, both practical and financial, that at the expiration of his articles he was able to accept an appointment from the eminent contractors Messrs. Lucas Brothers, by whom he was entrusted with the carrying out of many extensive works. All this time he had diligently devoted himself to the study of architecture, and on leaving Messrs. Lucas Brothers he commenced to practice as an architect, to which profession he devoted himself with success for fourteen or fifteen years. During that period he held several important public appointments, amongst which may be instanced that of City Architect and Surveyor to the Corporation of Oxford, a position, it need hardly be said, in which an artist of fairly respectable attainments might easily cover himself with disgrace by challenging unlucky comparison with the many noble buildings for which the University City is famous throughout the world. How Mr. Seckham acquitted himself of his difficult and delicate duties is shown by the new Corn Exchange, which stands in Oxford now as evidence of his talent, and in which noble building, by the way, it may be added, besides the transacting of the business for which it was intended, the Oxford Commemoration balls are now invariably held.

During his residence in Oxford Mr. Seckham married, in 1853, Kinbarra Swene, daughter of Bassett Smith, Esq., of Erdington, in the county of Warwick, banker. By this lady he has several children, his eldest son, Bassett Thorne Seckham, having been born in 1863. In 1864 Mr. Seckham determined to seek a wider field for his ambition and energy; and, leaving Oxford for London, was so successful in his undertakings that in short time he amassed a fortune which he considered justified him in retiring altogether from business at the early age or

forty-one. He then took up his residence at Hanch Hall, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, for which county he is a justice of the peace. This event, which he intended should determine his connection with a business life, curiously enough was the cause of his becoming a brewer. As a mere matter of investment of capital he became a sleeping partner in the house of Phillips Brothers, without the slightest intention of ever taking an active share in the business, but five years later it was determined to dissolve the partnership, and Mr. Seckham being fully impressed with the value of the undertaking, became its purchaser. As mentioned above, he at once sold the Burton branch brewery to Truman, Hanbury, and Buxton, the good fortune which seems to have attended him through life by no means deserting him in that negotiation. Having acquired the proprietorship of the brewery, his indomitable energy caused him to devote himself to its proper development, with what success we have shown. Mr. Seckham naturally now found it necessary to move nearer to Northampton, and he accordingly leased Wootton Hall and Park, a charmingly situated demesne only two miles from the town, where his liberal hospitality causes him to be not less popular with his neighbours than he has proved himself successful in his commercial undertakings. Wootton Park is always open to the townspeople when any sufficient occasion demands such a meeting place, and during our visit to Northampton we noticed posters still on the walls announcing the recent celebration there of the athletic sports of a local club "by kind permission of S.L. Seckham, Esq." Mr. Seckham is a Liberal-Conservative in politics, and we need hardly mention what are his opinions on the great Lawsonian questions, but he has been too busy a man all his life to devote much time to public affairs, even had his inclination lain in that direction. But in all his private relations he acquired great popularity, and the respect and esteem of all who have been brought in contact with him; the feeling he excited as an employer being manifested only on the 28th of last month on the occasion of the annual beanfast [sic] of the brewery, which was celebrated in Wootton Park, when the hospitality proffered by Mr. Seckham was not confined merely to the *employés* of the N.B.C. in Bridge-street, but extended to the landlords of the various inns connected with the brewery, those of free houses as well as those more closely identified with the establishment, and the wives of the *employés*. A most varied programme, including athletic sports, dancing, a concert, fireworks, etc., had been

arranged, and in addition most bountiful provision was made for the inner man. Upwards of 250 sat down to dinner in a magnificent tent erected for the occasion in the park, Mr. Seckham himself presiding, supported by Major McNeil, Mr. Shoosmith, Mr. Gole, Mr. Clifford Cox, Captain W.W. Cragg, Mr. Robertson, Mr. Everitt, etc. Mr. Shoosmith proposed "The Health and Prosperity of the Northampton Brewery Company." It was, he said, a company justly celebrated for its generosity, and for the excellent taste with which it selected those with whom it had to do business. He was sure they appreciated the good feeling with which Mr. Seckham had hospitably entertained them, and would always be anxious to bring a large connection to the firm. The toast was drunk amid cheers and honours, and Mr. Seckham replied, observing that he need hardly say he felt deeply interested, in the first place, in the success of the Northampton Brewery Company, and then in his own success. When he had the pleasure, some time last year, of meeting many of them in the brewery, he told them the reason why he had chosen to carry on the business in the name of a company instead of in his own name, and that was, that he lived in hope that every man in his employ would take such an interest in the affair that they would be a company, not in name only, but in deed. He now looked back with pleasure, and felt proud of the men around him, who took, if possible, a greater interest in the success of the undertaking than he did himself. So long as they continued to act as a bundle of sticks they would succeed. During the past year they had succeeded so far as this, that they had done a larger and safer business than had ever been done since the Brewery was erected. He did not tell them this with a view that they should "sit down and be thankful," but that they might put forth fresh energy and help him to become the largest single-handed brewer in the kingdom. He was not a great way from it now. He hoped

they would always feel confidence in knowing that their prosperity would attend upon his success. What they wanted to get was the support of friends outside, the appearance here of some of whom, he thought, he might attribute to the way in which they had been treated; and, as far as the Northampton Brewery Company was concerned, it would try to do better every year.

This little speech pretty clearly shows what manner of man Mr. Seckham is, and while what we have written proves that he is fully justified in his boast that he is not far from being the largest single-handed brewer in the kingdom, we think that it demonstrates also that his proud position is due rather to his own tact, skill, and energy, than to the efforts of any of those who have preceded him, a result, be it remembered, the more remarkable as Mr. Seckham does not profess to be a practical brewer, but is content to depend on his own judgement in selecting the most able heads of departments, and instructing them to produce the best possible article in the best possible manner.

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Notes

1. "In Conron's patent rakes the end of each rake is expanded into a stirrup-shaped form, to the horizontal portion of which a piece of stout sheet india-rubber is attached. When in action these elastic flaps sweep the surface of the plates. Their utility, except in special cases, is extremely doubtful". Sykes, W.J. and Ling, A.R. (1907) *The Principles and Practice of Brewing*. London: Charles Griffin and Company, p.448.
2. Lawrence and Co., Notting Hill, London, manufacturers of capillary refrigerators and other brewery equipment.