

Horsham Times 22nd August 1914 page 2

THE PUBLIC MEETING AT CRAWLEY.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir: In response to a placard calling upon us to gather at the George Hotel on Wednesday evening we crowded the Hall, each and all of us ready and willing to take our share and do our best for King and country at the time of crisis.

The intimation that Mr. Nix would take the chair was quite enough. We expected a meeting that meant business and something done, but, alas, 'twas a sorry spectacle that gradually unfolded itself before us—a sordid parade of petty local prejudices, rivalries and animosities, which, in brighter times, would have been treated and appreciated as a comic entertainment.

In fact, the saving grace of the whole show was the able and masterly manner in which the Chairman cautiously and tactfully evolved something like order out of the chaos prepared for him.

Doubtless that gentleman, when next he presides at such a meeting, will take care that he is in touch with the agenda before he sets foot upon the platform.

Resolutions drafted in the most ambiguous terms were handed to gentlemen, which they were asked to move and second, whilst in perfect innocence of what the resolutions might be intended to convey.

Grave as the occasion was we could not conceal our amusement at the plight that various gentlemen were in, and we rather admired the way they kicked the traces.

We were asked to give guarantees to a fund to be established, and then after we had given our guarantees, we were to meet again and wonder what to do with the fund.

We were asked to appoint a committee, but no man, not even the Chairman, could say the extent of the district that committee was to represent, and but for the spirited intervention of one reverend gentleman our local tradesmen were to be put in the pillory as "rogues and vagabonds," and a vigilance committee told off to see that their profits were in accordance with the views of these wise-acres, some of whom tell not, neither do they spin.

Our Chairman, in his opening address, in no uncertain measure, dealt with the war question, and roused the patriotic feelings of us all, but most of the gentlemen who had occasion to speak, could scarce forbear to do likewise and favour us with their version of a sort of "Rule Britannia" peroration.

Ultimately a committee was formed—the only bit of business that resulted—but the composition of that committee is anything but satisfactory, and, with power granted to them to add to their number, it is not likely that it will be improved.

The organisers of this meeting have proved themselves utterly incapable and unworthy of public confidence. In common decency they should take a back seat and allow others to take the lead.

Can Crawley and district not provide a half dozen capable experienced business men to take this matter up on proper business lines?

A committee should be formed to represent all classes of the community, irrespective as to whether they be Liberal or Conservative, Church or Chapel, Free Trader or Co-operative, retired or in business, or doing humble but honest manual labour.

Let all be represented fairly and equally, and let us have no more of such hole and corner work as we had thrust upon us so glaringly on Wednesday evening.

We are all willing and anxious to help, but let us be led by those who are capable of the task.

We write in no carping spirit of criticism. We appreciate and express our thanks to those who organised the meeting for their well intended efforts, but this mode of procedure has caused considerable dissatisfaction, and it is but right that such dissatisfaction should be plainly expressed.

Crawley, August 14th.

I am, &c.,

X. Y. Z.