

Report of the Council, read at the Annual Meeting, 3rd November, 1851.

IN presenting the first annual report of their proceedings, the council think it right, in the first instance, to explain the origin and objects of the society.

This society was established by some members of the Dublin Statistical Society, in November, 1850, for the purpose of promoting scientific inquiries into social questions of general interest.

As the questions are selected as well with the view of advancing the different branches of social science, as for the purpose of solving practical difficulties, the objects of the society are almost identical with those of the Statistical Society. The difference between the two societies consists in the means by which the common objects of both are sought to be attained.

In the Statistical Society the subscription is uniform and moderate in amount; the subjects of the papers read at the meetings of the society are selected by the authors, and the authors volunteer their services, and are unpaid.

In the Social Inquiry Society, on the other hand, large subscriptions are sought for; one subscription last year amounted to £25; there were several of £5, and the lowest or ordinary subscription amounts to double the subscription to the Statistical Society; the subjects and authors are both selected by the council, and the authors are paid for their reports.

In consequence of these differences in the means used, the council of the Social Inquiry Society are enabled to obtain reports on complicated and difficult investigations, entirely beyond the reach of the voluntary and unpaid exertions of individual inquirers in the Statistical Society.

Having thus noticed the distinction between the Social Inquiry and the Statistical Societies, the council have next to state the proceedings which they adopted in carrying out the objects of the society.

The first question selected for inquiry was the legislative measures requisite to facilitate the adoption of commercial contracts respecting the occupation of land in Ireland. To conduct this inquiry they selected Mr. Robert Longfield, the author of well-known treatises on the law of ejectment and the law of distress. Mr. Longfield prepared his report in a very able and satisfactory manner, and since its publication it has been frequently quoted as an authority on the subject to which it relates.

Of this report, 1,000 copies were printed and circulated by the

council; copies were sent to the members of both the Statistical and Social Inquiry Societies, and to those of the Law Amendment Society in London, to each of the Irish newspapers, and to a number of reviews and newspapers in England and Scotland; copies were also left for sale, and given to many other parties.

Some few of the wise suggestions in Mr. Longfield's report were adopted in the legislation of the past session of parliament; but the council regret to say that the law of landlord and tenant in Ireland still remains in the defective and unsatisfactory state which has been so clearly pointed out by Mr. Longfield in his report.

The next subject which the council selected for investigation was the patent laws, and the inquiry was entrusted to Dr. Lawson. This subject was suggested by a patent law amendment committee, formed in Belfast, and its importance was shown by the existence of similar committees in England, and by the subsequent appointment of a committee of the House of Lords, and the introduction of a bill by her Majesty's Government, founded on the report of the House of Lords' committee. This bill passed both houses of parliament, but at the close of the session was lost by a disagreement between the two houses respecting some amendments.

Dr. Lawson's report was very able and complete, and the suggestions contained in it were adopted by the Belfast Chamber of Commerce as the best solution of the present difficulties respecting the patent laws.

Owing to the failure of the Patent Law Reform Bill, the defective state of the law pointed out by Dr. Lawson remains in force, so that it is still true that the fees charged in obtaining patents for inventions in Ireland are greater than in any country in the world, whilst the protection practically afforded to property in inventions is more defective and uncertain than in any civilized country.

These defects seem the more unreasonable in a country where every legitimate means of encouraging industrial activity is so much required, and where the defects admit of such an easy remedy; the fees being capable of reduction by extending to the law officers of the crown the usual payment by salary out of the general taxes, instead of by a special tax on inventions; and the security of property in inventions being readily attainable by the adoption of the simple, complete, and effectual laws respecting patent property, which have been found so successful in the United States of America.

The next subject of inquiry was suggested to the council by one of its members, Mr. John Hancock, offering a sum of money which he had collected, for an inquiry into the merits of Chevalier Claussen's process for converting flax into a substance somewhat resembling cotton. For this inquiry the council selected Dr. Apjohn, the able Professor of Chemistry in the University of Dublin, and they expect to have his report in January next.

The next subject of inquiry was the taxes upon law proceedings. The council were struck with the inconsistency of transferring large branches of jurisdiction from the superior to the inferior courts on

account of the expense of the proceedings in the former, whilst no inquiry was made into the causes of the expensiveness so much complained of, to ascertain whether it admitted of a remedy. For this inquiry the council selected Mr. John O'Hagan, and his report will be completed before January.

The next subject of inquiry was the law of debtor and creditor, so far as relates to the proceedings subsequent to final judgment. In the recent Process and Practice Act all proceedings in the common law courts were rendered more simple, uniform, and effectual, so far as final judgment, but the reform stopped there. Again, the proceedings in the Incumbered Estates Court disclosed many frauds, by parties availing themselves of defects in the law to evade the payment of their just debts. By these considerations the council were led to choose the subject, and they selected Mr. William Ferguson, author of a "Treatise on Practice," to conduct the inquiry. His report will also be ready in January.

Besides these questions, other subjects have occupied the attention of the council, such as Savings Banks, partnerships of limited liability, the repeal of the Usury Laws, and the assimilation of the laws of England and Ireland. There is one subject to which they have devoted especial attention—namely, the question of a general register of deeds by reference to a public map, which will be found to be the basis of all reforms in the law of real property. On this question they have been in communication with a member of her Majesty's government, with a view to ascertain why the valuable and important act of Sir John Romilly for the registration of deeds in Ireland has been allowed to remain for upwards of a year without any effectual steps having been taken to carry it into effect.

The proceedings of the council on this and the other mentioned questions have, however, not yet been completed, and on a future occasion they will report the result of their exertions.

In conclusion, the council have to report that the finances of the society are in a satisfactory state, many members having renewed their large subscriptions, and others having increased theirs. The accounts will be submitted to the auditors, and the balance-sheet and profit and loss account, when audited, will be printed and sent to each member.

Social Inquiry Society for Ireland.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

	£ s. d.		£ s. d.
Allen, Joseph, Esq. ..	1 0 0	Lawson, James A. LL.D.	1 0 0
Allen, Richard, Esq. ..	20 0 0	Lattledale, William F. Esq.	1 0 0
Allman, George J. Esq. ..	1 0 0	Longfield, Mountfort, LL.D.	5 0 0
Atkinson, Richard, Esq. ..	5 0 0	Longfield, Robert, Esq. ..	1 0 0
Ball, Robert, LL.D. ..	1 0 0	Maley, A. J. Esq. ..	1 0 0
Barrington, Edward, Esq.	1 0 0	Moffett, Professor	1 0 0
Barrington, Richard, Esq.	1 0 0	Mulvany, Wm. T. Esq. ..	1 0 0
Bagot, Andrew H. Esq. ..	1 0 0	Mulvany, Richard F. Esq.	1 0 0
Bagot, Charles E. Esq. ..	1 0 0	Murland, J. W. Esq. ..	1 0 0
Carson, Joseph, Esq. ..	1 1 0	O'Hagan, John, Esq. ..	1 0 0
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Dublin, Archbishop of ..	5 0 0	Perry, James, Esq. ..	1 0 0
Gibson, Old, and Co. Messrs.	1 0 0	Pim, Jonathan, Esq. ..	1 0 0
Gunn and Cameron, Messrs.	25 0 0	Pim, W. Harvey, Esq. ..	10 0 0
Hancock, John, Esq. ..	5 0 0	Stuge, Joseph, Esq. ..	1 0 0
Hancock, Professor ..	5 0 0	Sullivan, Professor ..	1 0 0
Haughton, James, Esq. ..	1 0 0	Thom, Alexander, Esq. ..	2 0 0
Hone, Joseph, Esq. ..	1 0 0	Thomas, George, Esq. ..	1 0 0
Hone, Nathaniel, Esq. ..	1 0 0	Walsh, Professor ..	1 0 0
Haigh, James, Esq. ..	1 0 0	Webb, Richard D. Esq. ..	3 0 0
Ingram, J. K. Esq. F.T.C.D.	2 0 0		

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS.

DR. PROFIT AND LOSS.	CONTRA		CR.
1851,	1851,	£ s. d.	
3rd Nov To Cost of Inquiries,	3rd Nov. By Subscriptions ..	119 3 0	
Landlord and Tenant .. 20 0 0	By J Hancock, Subscrip-		
Patent Laws .. 20 0 0	tions for Inquiry into		
Taxes on Law Proceedings 20 0 0	Flax v. Cotton ..	9 9 0	
Law of Debtor and Creditor 20 0 0			
Flax v Cotton .. 10 10 0			
To Printing and Circulating			
Two Reports .. 84 6 5			
To Postage, Stationery, and			
incidental expenses .. 1 0 0			
To Stock 2 15 7			
£128 12 0			£128 12 0

DR. BALANCE.	CONTRA,		CR.
1851,	1851,	£ s. d.	
3rd Nov. To J. Hancock, Subscrip-	3rd Nov. By Inquiries not com-		
tions for Flax v Cotton 9 9 0	pleted	50 10 0	
To Members in arrear .. 11 0 0	By Stock	2 15 7	
To James Haughton, Esq			
Treasurer .. 32 16 7			
£53 5 7			£52 5 7