

One more reform urgently needed is the establishment of a tribunal for the passing of private bills. The notices of application to Parliament, which now fill the columns of the newspapers, are calculated to bring the subject to our notice. It is at present felt to be a great grievance that a town requiring a local act must go to the expense of a Parliamentary enquiry in London, before committees successively of Lords and Commons. The expense deters persons from carrying many useful local measures. A local bill for Newry cost, I think, £7,000. What is the remedy for this state of things? Parliament seems naturally reluctant to give up this jurisdiction, and I do not think it is necessary that they should do so. An efficient tribunal might be constituted jointly of Peers and Members of the House of Commons, who would be empowered to send a competent person to hold an enquiry at the place in case the bill was opposed, to take evidence, and report to the tribunal in London, who might adopt or modify his report.

Many localities are debarred from making useful improvements by the fear of the legal expenses to be incurred in applying for a bill to Parliament. This is, indeed, a pressing matter, and which I hope may be very soon effectually dealt with, and a general system introduced applicable to the whole kingdom, for Scotland and the country parts of England are interested in this matter, as well as the legislature itself, who are now prevented, by the pressure of such business, from giving their undivided attention to legislation proper.

I have always held that our interests are best advanced by an assimilation of our laws with those of England, a complete identification of the interests of every part with the whole, and a drawing closer of the bonds which unite the two countries. The Scotch understand the advantage of being identified with and forming an integral part of the greatest nation in the world, and avail themselves of that advantage in every way. Our people also are not slow to perceive this, and our sons have the ability to obtain their fair share of those great prizes to be won in the vast field which the British Empire throws open to them.

II.—*Report of the Council at the opening of the Twenty-sixth Session of the Society.*

[Read Tuesday, 19th November, 1872.]

THE Council have much pleasure in submitting the following report to the members.

During the past session some important papers were read on Jurisprudence. The President read a paper on the "Practicability of Codifying English Law, with a specimen Code." Two of our Vice-Presidents, Mr. Heron and Mr. Pim, introduced the code prepared by Judge Lawson as a bill in Parliament.

At the recent Social Science Congress at Plymouth, the Attorney-

General of England (Sir John Coleridge), in his address to the Jurisprudence Department, dwelt upon the importance of codifying the law in separate parts, as preferable to an elaborate digest, and announced that the branch he would first direct his attention to, would be the Law of Evidence.

There can be little doubt that our President has, by his concise draft code of the Law of Evidence, set a most useful example for the practical solution of this greatest of law reforms.

Professor O'Shaughnessy read a paper on "Legal Education in Ireland," setting forth the provision already made on this subject in Ireland, examining how far the requirements of the legal profession are met by the means of education so provided, and suggesting modifications of the existing arrangements.

Next to a good code, improved legal education is the great means of true progress in law reform. Law professors necessarily view the law from a more general and more scientific view than practitioners; and students who learn the first principles of law as a science, have necessarily more enlarged and progressive views than those who learn it only as an art. From the application of scientific principles, the wisest and most comprehensive reforms are derived.

Upon pure Political Economy, Dr. Longfield read a paper on the "Limits of State Interference with the Distribution of Wealth, in applying Taxation to the Assistance of the Public." He made some important suggestions for providing for the old age of the working man by a fixed allowance in advanced age, in the nature of a good service pension, and for the education, at the public expense, of the blind, and the deaf and dumb even, when not paupers. He recommended convalescent homes for their recovery from sickness, and more comprehensive arrangements for the cure of lunatics, and improved plans for public parks and labourers' dwellings.

Upon the branch of Social Science relating to the education of women and girls, Mr. William Graham Brooke read an important paper on "Educational Endowments, and their Application to the Middle Class and Higher Education of Women and Girls." He gave an interesting account of the progress of this question in England, and the backward state of the Endowed Schools question in Ireland, on which no progress had been made since the Report of the Endowed Schools (Ireland) Commission, so far back as 1857; and he made some practical suggestions for securing to girls their fair share of the Erasmus Smith and Incorporated Society Endowments, and concluded by pointing out the result of the unequal application of endowments for the middle class, and higher education of women and girls, in the want of adequate and efficient training of lady teachers.

On subjects which had been before the Society in former years, there were two papers; one by Mr. George Orme Malley, Q.C., on "Suggestions for the Extension of the Jurisdiction of the Civil Bill and Quarter Sessions Courts in Ireland;" and one by Mr. D. C. Heron, Q.C., M.P., on the "Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870."

There is no reform more urgently required than that advocated by

Mr. Malley—the extension of the jurisdiction of the Civil Bill Cou., so that the poor can have their rights of property and rights of wa. determined at a cost they can afford to pay—the present practical denial of justice in these disputes, for want of local jurisdiction, being the source of contention, violence, and, in extreme cases, of crime, in the struggle to settle by force the questions which the machinery of the superior courts is too expensive to deal with. The Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act, 1870, by giving legal recognition to the property of the poor in improvements, in incoming payments, and in tenant-right, has given rise to a large number of equitable rights, making it a matter of urgency to extend to the local courts in Ireland the equitable jurisdiction which has with so much benefit been conferred on the local courts in England.

With respect to legislation on subjects connected with the business of the Society, Mr. Heron carried a bill for giving to the Judges of the Court of Queen's Bench in Ireland the same powers of reforming the antiquated practice of the court, as were given to the judges in England so far back as 1844.

The Government bills on the subject of debtors and bankruptcy, were introduced by Lord O'Hagan in the House of Lords, and the passing of these acts has terminated the unsatisfactory delay in extending to Ireland the abolition of the creditor's right to imprison for debt, and the other recent reforms in bankruptcy adopted in England.

The Government bill for the revision of the statutes applicable to Ireland was also introduced by his Lordship. By this act the revision of the ante-Poyning English statutes has been extended to Ireland, and any lawyer can now know that his search for English statutes applied to Ireland by Poyning's Act, need not extend beyond the acts and parts of acts contained in the revised edition of the English statutes up to 10th of Henry VII.

The revision of the English and British statutes has been completed to the Union, and of the Imperial statutes to 1810. The revised edition of the English and British statutes up to 1800 has been published, but the statutes of the Parliament of Ireland from Henry II. to the Union still remain unrevised.

An Englishman can find the statute law by which he is governed, made prior to 1800, in three volumes, recently prepared and recently indexed; whilst an Irishman, to know the law of the same period applicable to Ireland, has to refer to thirteen volumes of the statutes—one of English statutes before Henry VII., and twelve of Irish statutes in the small edition condensed by the Government printer to the Irish Parliament before the Union; or, if he refers to the large and perfectly indexed edition of the Irish statutes in twenty volumes, he will have in all twenty-one volumes to consult.

During the recess, Mr. Lentaigne, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society, attended the International Prison Congress in London. Mr. Heron, Q.C., M.P., another of the Vice-Presidents, attended the Statistical Congress in St. Petersburg, as one of the representatives of the United Kingdom; and he proposes at an early meeting of the Society to read a paper upon what he observed and ascertained in Russia.

Mr. Thom, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society, presented a sum of 100 guineas, to be applied in fees for reports on practical questions in Irish Jurisprudence, by gentlemen to be selected by the President and Senior Secretary of the Society; the reports to be brought forward at the meetings of the Society.

The following gentlemen have been selected to report on the questions following their names:—

Mr. William Graham Brooke, on the difference in the law of England and Ireland as regards the protection of women.

Professor Donnell, on the best arrangements for securing the local transfer and registry of land in Ireland, where small holders desire to have it locally registered.

Mr. William Mulholland, on the best means of reducing the town law of Ireland to a code.

Mr. Constantine Molloy, on the application of the principles laid down by the Judicature Commission of the Irish local courts, so far as the application of the said principles is required in the case of tenants of agricultural holdings, labourers, occupiers of tenements in towns, and others whose means are too small to bear the expense of resort to the superior courts.

Mr. David Ross, on the jurisdiction of the Court of Chancery in the case of minors, with a view to suggest (1) the best means of improving the jurisdiction, and to extend the protection of the Court to as large a class as possible; (2) the best means of creating a similar jurisdiction for minors with property requiring protection, but of too small an amount to bear the cost of Chancery administration and protection.

The Council view with great satisfaction the revival of the system of reports on practical questions in Irish Jurisprudence, from which so much benefit arose in the earlier years of the Society, when able reports were made by Judge Lawson, Master Colles, Mr. Robert Longfield, M.P., Mr. John O'Hagan, Q.C., Dr. W. Dwyer Ferguson, Mr. Arthur Jackson, and others.

In the past year Barrington Lectures on Social Science were delivered at Armagh, Belfast, Coleraine, Downpatrick, Galway, Inchicore, Lurgan, Newry, and Rostrevor, under the auspices of literary societies or of local committees specially formed for the purpose.

In June last the Council resorted to the arrangement adopted in earlier years for the management of the Barrington Lectures, by selecting four lecturers for one course each; and Professor Donnell, Mr. William Mulholland, Mr. John Dockrill, and Mr. V. Coppingger, were selected.

At the suggestion of Professor O'Shaughnessy, the Council have had prepared an index of the subjects and authors of papers and reports, from the foundation of the Society in 1847, to the end of Vol. V. of the Transactions, 1871, and they desire to record their high opinion of the very satisfactory manner in which the index has been prepared by the Assistant Secretary, Mr. Hugh Booth Magahan.