

VII.—*Proceedings of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland.*

TWENTY-SECOND SESSION.—FIRST MEETING.

[Tuesday, 8th December, 1868.]

The Society met at 35, Molesworth-street, James W. Murland, Esq., V.P., in the chair.

Mr. Haughton, V.P., read a paper on "Further Extension of Free Trade and Direct Taxation."

Mr. S. M. Greer read a paper on "Government Purchase of Railways in Ireland: How can it best be accomplished?"

SECOND (THE ANNUAL) MEETING.

[Friday, 22nd January, 1869.]

The Society met at 35, Molesworth-street, the Right Hon. William Monsell, V.P., in the chair. His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant honoured the meeting with his presence.

His Excellency was accompanied by the Chief Secretary, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Charles Bruce, Mr. C S Roundell, and Mr. Courtenay Boyle, Private Secretary, with the Aides-de-camp in waiting.

Amongst those present were:—

Right Hon. Sir William Carroll, Lord Mayor, and the Lady Mayoress; Jonathan Pim, M.P.; Mr. Justice Lawson, Mr. David Sherlock, M.P.; N. D. Murphy, M.P.; T. F. Callaghan, Esq.; M. P. D'Arcy, M.P.; Sir Dominic Corrigan, Bart.; the Solicitor General; P. Callan, M.P.; Rev. Mr. Burke, P.P.; Dr. Churchill, President, College of Physicians; Mr. Donnelly, C.B., Registrar General; Dr. M'Donnell, P.L.C.; Sir William Wilde; Alderman Campbell; Mr. Edward Barrington, V.P.; Mr. William Haughton; Mr. Pollard Urquhart, M.P.; J. Sweetman, J.P.; Dr. Mapother; John Lentaigne, D.L, V.P.; Mr. R. M. Bellew, P.L.C.; Dr. Robert Lyons; Mr. Randall M'Donnell; Rev. W. Maziere Brady; Vesey E. Knox, J.P.; C. Kelly, Q.C.; Alderman Tarpey; Dr. Ingram, V.P., F.T.C.D.; G. Orme Malley, Q.C.; Sir Robert Kane, V.P.; Mr. Murland, V.P., Chairman of the Drogheda Railway Company; Very Rev. Dr. Spratt; Mark S. O'Shaughnessy, Esq.; Mr. J. A. Dease; Mr. T. Pim; Mr. William N. Hancock; Michael O'Shaughnessy, Q.C.; James Haughton, J.P., V.P.; Rev. Dr. Kirkpatrick; C. H. Hemphill, Q.C., &c.

The minutes of the last meeting were read by Mr. Molloy, Hon. Secretary, and confirmed by the Chairman. Dr. J. Little, Hon. Secretary, read the Report of Council.

The Right Hon. William Monsell, V.P., delivered the Inaugural Address

The Right Hon. William Monsell having vacated the chair, and the Lord Chancellor, President of the Society, having taken the chair,

Mr. Justice Lawson said he had been requested, as a Vice-President of the Society, to move a resolution which he was sure he

need not support by any argument—"That the thanks of the Society be offered to the Right Hon. Wilham Monsell, for the address which he delivered, and that it be published in the Journal of the Society." The name of his right hon. friend and his varied attainments and his vast experience were well known to every member of the Society. He was pleased to think that he was able to afford time from the important avocations which pressed upon him to go there that evening, and enlighten them with the valuable address which had been delivered. It would not be possible for him, only having heard that address, to pronounce any criticism upon it, but he might fairly say it was most suggestive in its character. It afforded matter for deep reflection, and, when they came to consider it, it might lead to practical results. This Society had been established for the purpose of investigating those great social problems which clustered around the science of statistics, and about which they in Ireland are particularly interested. In that Society they were enabled to discuss, with an entire absence of party feeling or discord, the most important social problems which could affect the relations of men in this country; and that, too, in a manner he hoped that had not barren or useless results. He thought he might say, without arrogating too much for the Society, that any one who looked over their journals, and who remembered the discussions that had taken place within the walls, would be able, without any egotism, to say that many of the social reforms of which they were reaping the advantage were first conceived and first discussed in this Society. Mr. Monsell, in the able paper which he had read, had investigated accurately the circumstances of the past with a view to account for their present shortcomings. Thus he (Judge Lawson) attributed to the want of self-government, and instanced as a mark of progress the establishment of municipal institutions. He said that those short-sighted politicians who now found fault with their local management should recollect that they had no experience, and could not look on the past for a guide as to what they should do.

MR. PRIM, M.P., said that he had the privilege of seconding the resolution which had been so ably proposed by his friend Judge Lawson. He could only say that the able paper just read gave him very great pleasure. He believed the facts which it had brought before them were new to a large number of those present; and the inferences Mr. Monsell had drawn from them suggested that they were of the greatest importance for the consideration of the people of this country. He had never been one of those who would say that they should entirely forget the past. He believed that Ireland should be studied through the light of the past, for it was quite impossible to understand her present condition without considering those causes which had brought her to it. The skilful physician would not attempt to prescribe for a patient, or rather would not have the same confidence in prescribing for a patient, without some knowledge of his previous life. In the same way, he felt sure, a statesman who wished to legislate for the nation must equally understand the character which has been impressed on it by its previous history. He had very great pleasure in being permitted to second

the vote of thanks to Mr. Monsell for contributing one of the ablest and most interesting papers they had ever heard read at any of their annual meetings ; and he believed his right hon. friend had given full character to the sentiments expressed by Judge Lawson as to the value of some of the discussions which had taken place there, and especially those discussions which referred to the social condition of Ireland. It was one of the earliest series of papers in the Society—that on “The Impediments to the Prosperity of Ireland,” by Dr. Hancock, who was one of its most prominent members, and to whom, more than any one else, they owed the existence of the Society. He begged to second the resolution.

The LORD CHANCELLOR, in putting the motion, said—May it please your Excellency, ladies, and gentlemen, I must say that it gives me very great pleasure to put this vote of thanks. I feel very strongly that my very dear and honoured friend who delivered the address this evening is entitled to the thanks of this Society. One of the reasons entitling him to your thanks is that he has told a great deal of truth—and I think we in Ireland require truth now and then to be told to us. I think it is too rarely any truth is told us about ourselves and against ourselves. We are disposed to be, with reference to ourselves, rather too euphemistic and too self-laudatory, and when we hear the truth told to us, and when we hear ourselves described very much as we are, we should be thankful to the man who so describes us. My right hon. friend spoke of us in the present, and he spoke of us very much as we are—with our misfortunes and with our shortcomings, as well as with our advantages and our distinctions. That, I think, entitles him to your consideration and applause. He spoke the truth of us as we are. He did not exaggerate our position, and he did not put any great bloom upon that which had not a bloom upon it naturally. There is more than that entitling him to your favourable consideration and again to your applause, and that is that it was in olden time said, “It is a virtue not to despair of the republic.” It is right that no man should despair of his country, and there is reason for no man despairing of Ireland. He has not despaired of Ireland, but he has told you that though the past has been dismal enough, and though the present is not altogether as it ought to be, you may, if you be true to yourselves, make the future all that it should be. He has told you that he has drawn a lesson from the past which, I think, has been drawn fairly and justly ; for if history be, as it is said to be, philosophy teaching by example, the man who looks to the future without looking to the past forgets the great lesson of the past—to teach all men who wish to be guided rightly in the future. On these grounds he is entitled to your favourable consideration and applause ; and therefore I put to you with great cordiality, that the thanks of this Society be given to Mr. Monsell for his address this evening.

The resolution was adopted by acclamation.

THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM MONSELL briefly expressed his acknowledgment of the compliment. He thought he deserved no thanks at all, for it was to him the greatest possible pleasure and

honour to be allowed to take part in the discussions of a society which had conferred such enormous benefits upon Ireland.

MR. DAVID SHERLOCK, Q.C., M.P., proposed "That the best thanks of the Society be given to his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant for honouring the Society with his presence." The Statistical Society of Ireland owes a double debt of gratitude to his Excellency. If he had condescended to visit this Society at any period of his government we should have felt a deep obligation, but he has now enabled us to record on the annals of the Society that at the very earliest moment of his coming to this country he has visited us, and that this is the first institution at which he has been present. The observations which have been made by previous speakers show the object, the intention, and usefulness of the institution, composed as it is of gentlemen differing widely in political opinions. Each member of it entertains on one subject a community of views, the object being by investigation and by inquiry to promote the prosperity of Ireland; hence it is that, retaining each personally his political opinions, he frankly and freely investigates. He listens to discussions on topics on which all feel a lively interest, and the result has been, as already pointed out, that much benefit, even in legislation, has accrued from discussions in this Society. I may venture to say that the Society has attracted, and will continue to attract, the attention of his Excellency. He has come here not merely to compliment individual members of the Society—not to add to a justifiable and honourable popularity—but to increase his knowledge of the country by hearing facts bearing on the statistical details which have been entered on so fully in the inaugural address, and thus to acquire information as to the wants to be supplied, as to the resources to be developed in this country, which by the gracious favour of her Majesty he has been appointed to govern. And can there be any matter of greater interest to a governor than the statistical condition of the country over which he is appointed? The details adverted to show the importance, which cannot be overrated, of a complete knowledge of the condition and resources, and the wants of a country. After some further observations, Mr. Sherlock concluded by moving a vote of thanks to his Excellency.

MR. J. W. MURLAND seconded the motion.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR said it was his pleasing duty to put to the meeting the resolution proposed by the member for the King's County, and seconded by Mr. Murland. They were bound cordially and strongly to express their gratitude to his Excellency for his gracious kindness in attending there that evening. They had a similar favour conferred on them by some of his Excellency's predecessors, in reference to some of whom he could never think without feelings of deep respect and reverential affection. His Excellency's first act was to attend their meeting, and he took that act to mean a great deal—to mean not merely an interest in the science of political economy, in the investigation of the principles which govern it and the relations of society in general—but he took it to indicate his Excellency's deep interest in political and social econo-

my as connected with the interests of Ireland, and he believed he had that interest deeply and strongly at heart. His excellent friend who delivered the address that evening spoke of his Excellency's relations to Ireland through those who were heretofore the friends of Ireland. That reference was justifiable and true, because the nobleman who bore his name in the House of Commons was always true to Irish interests, and was not the least regarded in the House as a great and trusted statesman, because he was on every occasion true and faithful to the principles which should be asserted if Ireland were really to be governed. He believed his Excellency would accomplish great things for Ireland, and he had not the smallest doubt that when the end of his viceroyalty approached, he would leave behind him an admiring and grateful people.

HIS EXCELLENCY EARL SPENCER, on rising to address the meeting, was received with loud applause. He said—My Lord Chancellor, ladies, and gentlemen, I thank you most sincerely for the cordial manner in which you have received the resolution which has been just put by the Lord Chancellor. I thank you particularly for the kind way in which you have received my name—a compliment I take it as the representative of her Gracious Majesty, and the loyal sentiment which it has expressed I most heartily acknowledge. Mr Monsell in the opening of his address was kind enough to allude to my name, and my Lord Chancellor has added remarks very recently on the same subject. I feel much gratified at the connection of my name with that statesman who, not many years ago, was the leader of the House of Commons. I have always felt the greatest pride in being connected with one whose honesty was so proverbial, and who studied so sincerely the true interests of his country. The Lord Chancellor has alluded to the views which he entertained on Irish affairs. I may allude to another point connected with Ireland in connection with my uncle's name, and that is, his connection with a name much revered in Ireland—that of Drummond. It is a matter of pride in my family that Mr. Drummond, I believe, almost first served in public life under the guidance of my uncle. I hope I have not been wrong in alluding to these topics; but I may assure this meeting that if it is satisfactory, as has been so kindly expressed by the mover and seconder of the resolution, that my first public act should be before this assembly—it is to me personally a matter of great congratulation that I am enabled first to appear in public in this country before so distinguished an assembly. I know that every Englishman who comes in my position to Ireland has a great deal to learn on the subject of Ireland—her institutions and her people. Some have to learn much more than others, from not having mixed so much in political life. But I feel sure that all who come to Ireland in the position of Viceroy must gain great knowledge from present observation. Without being here, they cannot thoroughly understand the wants and requirements of the country. The fact of being amongst the people is of the greatest possible importance to any one who wishes to understand the condition of this country. I myself feel this very much. I feel the advantage of being present here to-night to hear the very able

and instructive address which was read by my right honourable friend the Under Secretary for the Colonies, whose great ability and experience in this country justly command the respect of all who know him. But, my Lord Chancellor, when I see the records of this important Society, I feel that I have the best possible introduction to the knowledge I wish to acquire practically on measures connected with Ireland, for if I turn over the pages of the journal of your Statistical Society I find no subject of interest which has not been discussed, and fully discussed, by distinguished men of the greatest authority on social questions. I feel much diffidence in entering into a discussion of the objects of this Society before an assembly so well versed in the subject—an assembly, I may say, whose speakers have all that natural eloquence which we in England so much admire and so much envy—an eloquence which, in burnished words, calls attention to and renders lucid the most difficult and abstruse subjects. It is not the first time I listened to the eloquence of your lordship and others who have spoken to-night. It was often my greatest delight to be present at debates in the House of Commons, particularly when they were participated in by distinguished orators from Ireland. But with all humility I hope you will allow me to make a few observations on the subject of statistical societies like this, and remarks connected with the Society before which I now stand. I believe these societies have only very recently become popular in the country. I may say that perhaps they are not so popular even among intelligent men as they should be, for I believe a very considerable prejudice exists on the subject of statistics and political economy. Not only are these subjects dry and dreary for some to pursue, but they are considered by many to be impracticable; and in this practical age everything that is impracticable is considered to have a cardinal defect. I think perhaps it is useful to look and consider how these prejudices—erroneous prejudices—for I believe them to be erroneous prejudices—exist. I believe many politicians and others who pursue the subject very often go to a discussion of the subject with foregone conclusions. They wish to fortify their knowledge by argument, and take a table of facts or figures, and from these facts and figures they cull those which best suit their argument. Very likely from the same table of facts or figures an opponent may come and take the figures which suit his purpose also, and the public who are not masters of this subject turn round on those who are following this science, and scoff, and say, “What is the use of a society like this, or of getting figures together if you can prove both sides of an argument by them?” As far as I can see that is a most erroneous impression to entertain of societies like this. You might as well condemn entirely the system of weights and measures, because some tradesman—some low tradesman—who is not honest, falsifies weights and measures. On the contrary, I believe that accurate figures and statistics are the greatest possible boon for all those who wish honestly to consider the subject. When I say honestly consider the subject, I mean when a man really and honestly faces the difficulty before him, and wishes to adduce his knowledge from his facts, and not his facts from his knowledge. I will

not presume before this assembly to illustrate what I say, but I feel sure that you are only doing in a scientific manner what the merest uninstructed savage does in the wood, in the prairie, or on the lake. He observes a phenomenon of nature constantly recurring, or habits of animals repeating, and he draws his conclusions from that, or his statistics, and from those statistics he adduces his conclusions. I believe you do only in a scientific manner—you, political economists—what this savage does for himself in another form. The same way with political economists. Abstract theories are much dreaded by politicians. They do not like the application of mere abstract theories, and they are quite right to be afraid of their universal application, for I believe the principles of political economy can never be applied universally. You must consider the position of the country, the state and progress of the people, before you apply its principles. But still it is of the greatest possible advantage that from accurate figures collected, and from watching the recurrence of these facts, the general principle should be established. I imagine that the power and influence of a philosopher depend more or less on the general application of his doctrines. Now, I believe that this Society carries out those views in the most efficient way. I was looking back at some of the records of the Society, and I was very much struck with some of the remarks that you, my Lord Chancellor, made some years ago. You stated the object of the Society, and the work of this Society is the collecting, and marshalling, and propounding facts, to ward away the quackeries of mere scientific legislation. I believe that no better definition could be given of a society which accompanies, as your Society does, hand in hand, the pursuit of accurate statistical knowledge, and that of political economy. I believe, in Ireland, this pursuit is of particular interest. I know it is of particular interest to me, as an Englishman, for I am aware that in respect of facts as regards statistics, Ireland has taken precedence of England. I would instance one—it is that of agricultural statistics. We know by the able address of to-night of what immense importance accurate information on all subjects regarding the cropping and stocking of the country is, of what immense interest all these facts are. In England we only obtained the benefit from such a system after the cattle plague. I remember very well when I was serving on the Cattle Plague Commission, we were not able to ascertain the number of cattle in England and Scotland. The computation we had to make was guess work. We could not tell the probable loss it would entail on the country, nor could the Insurance Companies form any table on the subject. Now, my lord, at the present time, I conceive that this Society will be of the very greatest possible importance. Great measures are being and will be discussed in Parliament this session, and probably the following session, in relation to Ireland, and the success of these measures or the details of these measures will greatly depend on the accurate information which the government may obtain for dealing with them. I will not touch on most important, though I think my remark applies to them, but I would allude to a subject which has been mentioned to-night, and which I see has been more than once discussed in the

papers of your Society. I allude to the railroad reform in this country—and also sanitary reform. I cannot imagine two questions of greater interest or importance to this country than these two questions, affecting as they do the material prosperity of the country—nay more, I would say the moral prosperity of the country. Now I will not detain you longer. I will only hope that this Society will continue to prosper. It has done noble work already; it has, as Mr. Justice Lawson said, been the pioneer of many important matters for this country. I cannot conceive any more noble task than when strife is going on elsewhere, you come here from both sides of politics, to discuss measures in which you have a common interest. Too often, alas! political and religious strife blind the eyes and deaden the senses of those who have to consider these questions. Here you are removed from those feelings; you have the noble duty of seeking out truth, of promoting truth, and I trust that we may all—whether Englishmen, Irishmen, or Scotchmen—strive with out utmost might to promote those objects of truth, without which, I feel sure, the prosperity of the country, which we all so much desire, cannot be obtained.

His Excellency concluded amidst loud applause.

The proceedings then terminated.

THIRD MEETING.

[Tuesday, 16th February, 1869]

The Society met at 35, Molesworth-street, the Right Hon. Mountfort Longfield, LL.D., Ex-President, in the chair.

Mr. George Orme Malley, Q.C., read a paper on “The Defects of Private Bill Legislation.”

Mr. John Hancock, J.P., read a paper entitled “Should the Local Government Acts be extended to Ireland?”

The following gentlemen were elected members of the Society:—Messrs. William Findlater, John Ribton Garston, M.R.I.A., John T. Gilbert, F.S.A., Wilham John Hancock, Samuel Haughton, Wilham Haughton, Charles Kelly, Q.C., Henry Lincoln, Hugh M’Ternan, J.P., Thomas Nedley, M.D., W. R. Trench, A.B.
