

JOURNAL
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STATISTICAL SOCIETY.

JANUARY, 1856.

I.—*Report of the Council at the Opening of the Ninth Session of the Society.*

[Read November 19th, 1855.]

GENTLEMEN,

AT the commencement of this our Ninth Session, it will be satisfactory to the members to collect from the proceedings of the past year, that while the length of time during which the Society has maintained its position begins to entitle it to a place among the established institutions of the country, there are happily no symptoms of that cessation of progress which sometimes characterises these; but, on the contrary, with advancing years we find its efficiency increase, and it approaches maturity with all the energy and vitality of youth.

The number of communications brought forward at the meetings of the Society, and the importance and variety of the subjects they embrace, afford pleasing testimony of the activity and research of our principal contributors; and the unusually good attendance which there has been on most occasions, furnishes satisfactory proof of the interest taken in the proceedings by the general body of our members. A considerable proportion of the communications relate to questions arising in some measure in connexion with the present war. Out of the greatest evil not unfrequently some good arises, and it will afford a little consolation for all the sufferings and misery which necessarily spring from armed hostilities, if they lead to a

solution of some of the important social questions they suggest, several of which, after having been eagerly canvassed during the last general continental war, have remained undecided ever since. Professor Leslie, in his essay on "Maritime Captures and Commercial Blockades," has questioned the policy of existing regulations as to the treatment of enemies' property found at sea, and suggested as a substitute an extension of the milder system adopted of late years by more civilized belligerents, in their intercourse on land with the subjects of hostile nations. Mr. Hutton, in a paper on "The True Policy of Modern Warfare, and the principles of Maritime Seizures," has entered more generally upon the international question, and has published the results he arrived at in a separate pamphlet deserving of attentive perusal. The interest now appertaining to everything tending to throw light on the real condition of Russia, has been turned to account by Mr. Wynne, and, under the title of "Russian Serfs and English Labourers," he has discussed some of the social resources of that vast country which ventures to carry on so sanguinary and obstinate a struggle with the bulk of civilized Europe. The subject of standing armies, as a necessary protection for the more polished against barbarous nations, has been considered by Mr. Jemison, and derives great importance from the practical test which existing events afford for measuring the accuracy of such speculations. And the financial questions to which war gives prominence have not been neglected; Dr. Hancock having brought forward a paper entitled, "What a Perfect Income Tax of Ten per Cent. would produce," in which he exhibits the vast financial resources which an income tax at that rate would open, if extended to all incomes from £20 a year upwards; and Professor Hussey Walsh, in an essay on "The Alternative of Loans or increased Taxation," having stated his grounds for objecting to all such sudden and considerable augmentations of the public burthens, as must follow from attempts to defray the entire cost of an expensive war without seeking the aid of the loan market. .

But the war and kindred subjects have not made our members neglect the investigation of social topics of more peaceful and domestic bearing. Mr. Haughton has favoured the Society with some statistics given in evidence before a select Committee of the House of Commons on the vexed question of Public Houses. Mr. Dowden has given us an essay on some of the causes affecting the sanitary condition of large cities; a subject of absorbing interest, while the course of civilization tends to draw the inhabitants of so many localities into closer and closer proximity. The difficult question of Factory Education has been noticed by Mr. M'Kenna, who has also favoured us with a supplemental treatise on Partnerships of Limited Liability; a subject which an Act of Parliament passed last session has at length afforded an opportunity of submitting to the test of experience. And Dr. Hancock has brought forward a succession of brief essays, suggested by the different events and occurrences of the day. In connexion with the opening of the East India civil service to public competition, he has drawn attention to the excessive mortality of British residents in India, as an essential element to be taken into account by the young aspirant to office in that country.

The benefits of Incumbered Estates jurisdiction with parliamentary title has started the inquiry as to why they should not be extended to the rest of the United Kingdom, and what means might be adopted for bringing within their reach estates for life, at present subjected to the ruinous management, or rather mismanagement, of chancery receivers. And the heartless spirit in which poor-laws in some instances have been administered, has led him to question the propriety of the workhouse as a mode of relief for widows and orphans.

But one essay not bearing on any peculiar topic of the day has been communicated to the Society. The subject selected—the Malthusian Theory of Population—does not appear, at first sight, attractive; but, as treated by Mr. Evelyn, no such fault could be complained of; and the paper certainly gave rise to one of the most animated, interesting, and lively discussions which ever took place in our Society.

In former reports we had occasion to advert to the means adopted for extending the sphere of utility of the Society, by placing it in connexion with many of the scientific bodies established throughout Ireland, and a few of those in England. The arrangements originally entered into with this object in view are still carried out, and continue to afford satisfactory results. We are in communication with a considerable number of the literary associations of the Irish provincial towns, and from London we receive copies of the proceedings of the Society of Arts, Statistical Society, and Law Amendment Society, which are placed at the disposal of the council. But this year a step of another description has been taken for extending the operations of the Society, and we have sought to advance its utility yet further, by widening the scope of our investigation. The Society has been amalgamated with the Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, upon terms first agreed on by the joint committee of the council of each body, and finally adopted by this Society at an extraordinary meeting held in the month of March last. The terms of amalgamation are as follows:—

1.—That the objects of the Statistical Society shall be enlarged, so as to include those of the Social Inquiry Society; and, for this purpose, that the business of the Society shall be for the future the promotion of the study of Statistics, Political Economy, and *Jurisprudence*.

2.—That each member of the Social Inquiry Society shall, during the present session, be entitled to be admitted a member of the Statistical Society, without the payment of any entrance fee, and without ballot.

3.—That all the publications of the Social Inquiry Society shall be transferred to the Statistical Society, and shall be included in all future lists of its publications.

4.—That the balance of the funds of the Social Inquiry Society shall be transferred to the Statistical Society, for the purpose of commencing a trust fund in connexion with the Statistical Society; to be called the “Social Inquiry Fund.”

5.—That it shall be part of the business of the Council of the Statistical Society to apply the Social Inquiry Fund, and all monies

which may be added thereto, towards the promotion of scientific inquiries into social questions of public and general interest, in the same manner as the Council of the Social Inquiry Society are now empowered to apply the funds of that society.

6.—That on these terms being adopted at a meeting of each society, the Social Inquiry Society of Ireland shall be merged in the Dublin Statistical Society, and its existence as a separate society shall cease.

Of the business transferred in accordance with the preceding, the Report on Jamaica has been completed by Professor Hussey Walsh, and will shortly be published; and some further steps have been taken on the Savings' Banks question by Dr. Hancock, to whom the subject has been referred.

In former sessions, the interesting and eminently practical question of Decimal Currency has been brought before the Society on more than one occasion. During the session which has just closed, we have not been without using our endeavours to assist, as far as lay in our power, in bringing the matter to a satisfactory conclusion. We have co-operated earnestly with the Liverpool Decimal Association, in pressing the question on the notice of the public and the parliament, by distributing their pamphlets among our corresponding societies, and forwarding a petition in favour of Decimal Currency to the House of Commons, which petition, signed by the leading members of Council, including our President, the Archbishop of Dublin, has been presented by one of our society, Mr. Pollard Urquhart, member for the county of Westmeath.

The management of the Barrington Lectures on Political Economy continues to be confided to us by the trustees of the bequest; and we can refer with pleasure to the accounts received from several of the provincial towns of the lectures, lecturers, and attendance. Even in the small town of Trim, the numbers attending exceeded, on an average, one hundred, and on one occasion were so high as one hundred and sixty. The audience, we are informed, were highly gratified with the course of lectures, and expressed a hope that on a future occasion they might be favoured with another. This growing taste for economic science must be very pleasing to all who are interested in the successful working of the Barrington bequest, and the best results may be anticipated to flow from the diffusion of sound principles in this department of knowledge among the rural population and the poorer classes of our towns and cities.

Last May, from the highly qualified candidates who came forward, we selected as Barrington Lecturers for the current year, Professor Moffett, already so well known to us all; Mr. Evelyn, a graduate of the Dublin University; and Mr. Ross and Mr. Busted, of the Queen's College, Belfast and Cork. Applications for courses of lectures were received from various provincial towns, and the courses of lectures for the year commencing last May, have been conferred on Armagh, Clonakilty, Limerick, and Portaferry. We trust it may be in our power, in the next Report, to record that these courses have proved as successful as the reputation of the lecturers, and the earnestness and position of the applicants, would lead us to anticipate.

Last September, the British Association for the Advancement of Science met at Glasgow; and the Statistical section, from which the plan of this society was originally taken, was attended and actively supported by several of our members. Mr. Locke brought forward a communication on "The Agricultural Labourers of England and Wales, their Inferiority in the Social Scale, and the Means of effecting their Improvement." And papers were read by Professor Hussey Walsh on "The Condition of the Labouring Population of Jamaica as connected with the Present State of Landed Property in that Island;" and "On the Price of Silver of late years as affording no correct measure of the general Value of Gold." The Association, it is expected, will meet in Dublin the year after next; and we have done all in our power towards promoting so desirable an event, by adding the invitation of the Society to the number of others which emanated for the same purpose from this city.

II.—*Address delivered at the opening of the Ninth Session of the Society,*
by Mountifort Longfield, Esq. Q.C. LL.D.

[Read November 19th, 1855.]

We are now entering upon the ninth session of this Society, and the duration of its existence during a period of eight years must be a source of unfeigned gratification to all its members, as of itself affording a sufficient proof of the possibility of uniting Irishmen of all creeds and parties in one common object. Our meetings here have shewn how important subjects may be discussed in perfect harmony by persons sincerely anxious to arrive at truth. As a Statistical Society, our object is to obtain and diffuse a knowledge of facts and figures; or, more strictly speaking, of those facts which are most accurately expressed and compared by means of numbers. It is also the object of this Society to hold discussions on political economy, especially on subjects admitting of statistical illustration. I should have deemed it unnecessary to say anything in defence of the utility of such investigations, if I had not lately seen some importance attached to a quotation from an eminent statesman, who is reported to have said that he could prove anything from *facts* and *figures*. Such an assertion could only have been made in ridicule of the manner in which persons sometimes invented facts and figures, for the purpose of supporting their arguments. The best preventive of such a practice is the general diffusion of statistical knowledge, whenever a company will contain men competent to judge of the truth of such statements. Universal ignorance encourages and supports audacious and reckless statements. Every party will (and that, too, very often in perfect good faith) make statements of facts in accordance with and support of their own particular views. The reasoning may be fair, assuming the facts to be as stated; and thus it often happens that our opinions induce us to credit facts which, by a