

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

sophistry of which we are unconscious, we bring forward in support of those opinions. If the entire question at issue between two persons or parties obviously depended upon certain facts, their truth might be investigated, and the dispute decided; but when certain facts and figures are brought forward in support of perhaps only one argument out of several tending to the same conclusion, we may be certain that the foundation of such arguments will never be submitted to a satisfactory investigation. The ordinary patience of humanity would not stand such a process; the interest of the dispute would die away, and one party would obtain and enjoy the victory, while his adversary was collecting and comparing facts to refute the statements by which the victory had been obtained.

The most perfect remedy for this source of error is the collection and dissemination of statistical facts, collected without regard to any special views, and published in such a manner that they may be examined and compared as truths interesting for their own sake, and independent of any argument to be deduced from them. When such facts are annually collected and published, they are subjected to a more skilful and impartial examination than would otherwise be applied to them.

Among the proofs that statistical knowledge is highly prized and well cultivated in Ireland, I may refer to Thom's Almanac and Directory, containing as it does a mass of the most interesting statistical information respecting Ireland, such as I believe could not have been furnished in any other age respecting any other country. This almanack requires much care and skilled labour, and considerable expense must be incurred in its preparation. But it is published as a commercial speculation, and it is reasonable to presume that unless there existed a large demand for such information in Ireland, the able and enterprising proprietor of the work in question would before this have turned his abilities and capital into some other channel; instead of which, we find increased stores of information in the volume in each succeeding year.

Of this mass of information regarding Ireland, the agricultural statistics afford the surest indication of its progress in wealth and industry; and on this head we are supplied with very full information, owing to the wise orders first made by Lord Clarendon in 1847, and pursued steadily since that period. Returns are obtained every year from the constabulary, giving an account of the number and size of the farms, duly classified in every district; of the quantity of land under each kind of crop; of the average produce of each kind per acre; and of the quantity and value of live stock of every description. In the latter valuation, the same kind of stock is valued at the same price (and that a moderate one), in successive years, without any regard to the fluctuations in their market value. Thus, every change which the returns shew in the value of the stock indicates a corresponding change in the number.

In procuring this information, I have the authority of the Registrar General, who has applied himself with the greatest zeal and ability to the collection and arrangement of those returns, for stating that, without exception, the peasantry, small farmers, and all classes afforded every assistance to the constabulary. At first sight, this

may appear a fact scarcely worthy of observation; but there are circumstances which lead me to consider it as an important, surprising, and pleasing fact. In the first place, the information given to the constabulary by the peasantry is entirely and purely voluntary on their part, and of that they are perfectly well aware. Every man knew perfectly well that without exposing himself to the slightest punishment or inconvenience, he might refuse to tell the extent of his farm, the quantity of land he had under different kinds of crops, and the number of horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry that he possessed. In the next place, we are to bear in mind that, although the returns are given to the public in gross, they are first collected in detail by the constabulary. The returns sent to Dublin contain the name of every occupier, the size of his holding, and the amount of every kind of crop and stock which he possesses. It would not be at all surprising if the people should feel some apprehension at such minute inquiries into their private affairs, and fear that such knowledge so obtained might be made ancillary to taxation. The readiness with which those enquiries were met seems to prove a growing opinion among the people, that government is a thing intended for the good of all, and that the information which it possesses will in general be used to promote the public benefit. It also shows that the appreciation of the use and object of statistical science is becoming more general than it was formerly. Some of us may remember the opposition which the Ordnance Survey had to encounter in many parts of the country, and yet how little there was in it to alarm any one's apprehensions, compared with the enquiries which are now answered without hesitation; for, in the Ordnance Survey, no enquiries were made into individual rights or properties. I am informed, also, that the published agricultural returns are read with great interest and intelligence in all parts of Ireland; and that the summary, which is now published at a much earlier period than when the system was first adopted, is known in time to be of assistance to the farmer in the course which he should adopt for the ensuing year. In this respect, Ireland presents a favourable contrast to the sister country, in which it has been found impossible to obtain the information that is so readily afforded here. Men of rank and influence in England have even advised the farmers to keep this knowledge as a secret to themselves, in order that they might be thereby enabled to sell their commodities to greater advantage to the ignorant public. This may be very cunning; but, in order to make use of the advice, it is necessary that the farmers should first have that knowledge which they are recommended to keep as a secret to themselves; and it seems evident that, in the absence of published agricultural returns, the farmer whose knowledge is chiefly confined to the details of his own farm, is likely to be over-matched by the corn-merchant, whose business compels him to make as full enquiries as he can through the whole extent of the land. The knowledge, however, possessed by either party is very vague, and is little more than a guess more or less accurate, according to the sagacity of the individual.

Many of us have no doubt seen a statement supported by a great many figures, and published under the authority of a name of well

deserved reputation. It was to this effect; that, owing to an increased breadth of land sown with wheat, and a higher style of cultivation applied to it, an average crop this year would be one fourth more than in ordinary years. But the deficient harvest makes it one tenth less than in ordinary years; and then follow the calculations with which I shall not trouble you, as the result must obviously be that the crop is one-eighth more than the average crop of former years. But in such cases, although the result follows immediately from the hypothesis, it answers the writer's purpose much better to give the figures and calculations at full length, for several reasons. In the first place, when an argument is composed of that sophism which logicians call a *petitio principii*, it is more likely to pass undetected, if the reasoning which draws the conclusion from the assumed premises is involved in some complication. The identity between the conclusion and the assumed premise is less apparent, when they are kept at some distance from each other, and a train of reasoning or calculation employing some mental labour is interposed between them. By such a process, also, as the calculations alluded to, different persons are misled even by opposite states of feeling. One man, to whose genius the comparison of large numbers is abhorrent, feels that he ought not to deny a conclusion founded on calculations which are offered to him for examination, and which he declines to examine. Another man, on the contrary, having a taste for calculations, goes through them all, and, finding them accurate, proceeds no farther. Few persons will examine carefully all the steps of a long argument; they are satisfied with taking a few steps in it as samples, and if these are found correct, will take the rest for granted. The samples taken will generally be the arithmetical calculations, as they are the steps in the argument on which the most certain judgment can be formed.

These returns also afford a gratifying proof of the progress which this island has made within the last fourteen years. I shall not go into the detailed calculations, as the general result is sufficient. The returns in 1841 give £19,399,843 as the total value of all the live stock in Ireland, horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, &c. In 1855, fixing the same price upon each kind of animal, the value is £32,988,390, being an increase of 13,500,000, (equivalent to 70 per cent.) in the number and estimated value of the live agricultural stock of Ireland in the space of fourteen years, and indicating a probable increase of four or five millions sterling in the annual value of the agricultural produce of Ireland. This increase of wealth chiefly belongs to the industrial classes, who are supported by their own industry, aided by a small active capital; though of course some portion of this greatly increased agricultural capital belongs to the wealthy who do not depend upon it for their comforts. But several circumstances connected with its nature and distribution shew that the increase has not been in any undue degree absorbed by the wealthy classes. I shall mention one or two, chiefly because they lie more upon the surface than other facts equally suggestive of the same result. The number of horses has increased within the year from 545,929 to 555,536, being an increase of 9,607 or 1 in sixty. Of these, the horses kept for amusement or recreation have increased from 23,813 in

1854, to 24,014 in 1855, being an increase of only 201, or less than one in one hundred. The increase in Connaught is more than in the whole of Ireland, shewing that in the remaining provinces, although the total number of horses has increased, the number kept for recreation has diminished. I may here observe, as an instance of the low value placed upon stock by the Census Commissioners, that eight pounds is given as the average value of a horse. If any gentleman doubts whether that is a low figure, let him put eight pounds in his pocket, and go to a fair to buy a horse with the money, and judge what kind of animal he can get for it.

Again, I find that cattle have increased in the year 1855 from 3,497,901 to 3,556,616, being an increase of 58,715, or a little less than 1 in 60; while the number of milch cows has increased in the same period from 1,517,672 to 1,557,595, being an increase of 39,923, or more than one in forty. This increase is chiefly caused by the greater number of small farmers who can afford to keep one or two milch cows. It is well known that milch cows are kept in a much larger proportion by the small farmers than by the large proprietors, who do not wish to depend much upon a stock which requires so much care and labour to make it profitable.

I have, however, to observe that in the year 1855, as compared with the year 1854, there is a considerable falling off in two articles of no slight importance to the small farmer, viz., swine and flax. In the former, the number has been reduced from 1,342,549 in 1854, to 1,174,224 in 1855, being a falling off of 168,325. I cannot account for the decrease, unless by supposing (it is a mere conjecture) that there was something connected with the time or the manner in which the returns were taken in 1854, that increased the number apparently of pigs under the age of one year; for it is in the young animals that the decrease has taken place. A comparison of the numbers returned for a few successive years will shew the grounds on which I hazard this conjecture, and may shew the convenience of having such returns made every year, and its effect in preventing hasty conclusions being drawn from the returns of any one year. In 1841, being the date of the latest return which was made prior to the famine, the value of the pigs, estimated at £1 5s. a head, was £1,412,813. This was reduced in 1849, the first return made after the famine, to £795,463, shewing a reduction of nearly one half. From that period, the number increased steadily, at the rate of about £100,000 a year in value, or 80,000 in numbers, until the return of the year 1853, which shewed a value of £1,431,181. From that, in 1854, the number increased suddenly to £1,678,186, being an increase of £247,005 in one year, or more than double the increase which had taken place in any of the preceding years. This increase was observable chiefly in the number of pigs under one year old. Thus, although the return for 1855 is less than the extraordinary number returned for the year 1854, it is greater than the number returned for any preceding year; and it exceeds by 44,000 heads, the number possessed by the people in 1841, when the population of the country was one million and a half more than it is now. There is nothing discouraging in this, when carefully considered.

I shall now make a few short remarks on the flax returns. These shew a cultivation of 97,192 acres in the present year, against 151,403 acres in the year 1854, being a decrease of 54,211 acres in the year; and a similar decrease may be observed by comparing the present with any of the four years immediately preceding. It is probable that this falling off may be attributed chiefly to two circumstances; first, the high price of provisions, which made the cultivation of wheat or any kind of corn more profitable than that of flax. This would be a very satisfactory cause; for it is best for themselves and for the country, that the farmer should cultivate chiefly those crops from which they themselves derive the greatest profit.

A second reason for the diminished cultivation of flax this year was, that it was carried on under an unnatural stimulus for three or four years preceding. Farmers were not left to act entirely on their own judgment, but were in many instances persuaded by lectures and addresses, that flax must be a certain profit to the cultivator in almost any situation, and under any circumstances. The difficulty of procuring a market for the produce was apparently obviated by promises made, in many instances, to purchase the crop at a remunerating price, as soon as it was pulled. The hopes thus excited were disappointed, and many who engaged in the cultivation of flax, with very little knowledge of the subject, but in confident expectation that when they had surmounted all the difficulties caused by their ignorance, they might at least be sure of a good and ready market for their crop, found actually that there was not any person within their reach who would purchase it on any terms. I have heard that in remote districts of Ireland, flax may be found two or three years old, which the growers have been hitherto unable to sell. Most of us have read their letters in the newspapers, complaining bitterly of the manner in which their hopes were disappointed, and warning others not to be led astray by the same delusion.

However, notwithstanding the falling off in this year, the number of acres cultivated in 1855 is greater than it was in 1841; being 97,192 against 83,445 in 1841, and in 1809 the number of acres under cultivation of flax was 76,474. The growth of flax is now almost entirely confined to Ulster; Cork being the only county in any of the other three provinces in which more than one thousand acres is under flax cultivation. On the whole, we have no reason to be discouraged at the apparent decrease in pigs and flax; though they have been deemed the chief source of the cottager's wealth, and the materials of his industry.

Among the various statistical returns which give information on the state of the country, none are more important than those which relate to the operation of the poor laws. On this head, the reports from the Poor Law Commissioners shew that the condition of the poor in Ireland is steadily improving every year. This improvement is such an agreeable subject of contemplation, that I cannot forbear stating a few facts and figures, although to most of those who hear me it must appear an idle repetition of what they already know. I shall, however, confine myself chiefly to the three years ending on the 29th days of September, 1852, 1853, and 1854. It is now a matter of history, that after the famine of 1847 pauperism

increased to such a degree, that more than two millions of people, i. e., about one-third of the entire population of the country, received either in-door or out-door relief during the year 1849. A steady reduction in the number of persons requiring relief then took place, so that the numbers relieved in the year ending 29th September, 1852, were 504,864 in-door relief, and 14,911 out-door relief; or, in round numbers, 520,000 altogether. In the year ending 29th September, 1853, the numbers were 396,436 in-door relief, and 13,232 out-door relief; or, in round numbers, 410,000 altogether; while, for the year ending on the 29th September, 1854, the numbers were 310,608 in-door relief, 9,008 out-door relief; or, in round numbers, 320,000 altogether; being a decrease of about 90,000 persons in the year, or 200,000 in the two years. Thus, notwithstanding the great decrease of pauperism that had previously been effected, a further decrease of about 40 per cent has taken place within the last two years.

Such statements as these would almost appear too good to be true, were it not that the returns furnished by the Poor Law Commissioners are given in such minute detail, and are so well arranged, that it is almost impossible that any serious error could escape detection. Some of those details shew the progress of a beneficial change in the condition of the country. Thus, the practice of paying the peasant for his labour in land, instead of money, has always been lamented as one source of the poverty and distress of the agricultural labourer. It made the labourer to a certain degree independent of the price of food. A deficient crop did not lead to increased exertion or increased economy during the early part of the year, and this frequently led to something approaching to a famine towards the end of the season. Thus, the month of June and the first week of July, until the new potatoes were ripe, was generally a period of privation, and frequently one of intense suffering. It was the famine season. This state of things had for some time an influence on the condition of the workhouses, making the number of paupers attain its maximum each year in the month of June. A change in this respect was observed about the year 1851; and now, and for the last four years, the maximum number of paupers in each year is found to be in February, viz., the period of the year when there is the least demand for agricultural labour, instead of the month of June, that period when the peasant's little store of potatoes is generally exhausted. The month of October is the time when the number of paupers is the least. The variation, according to the season of the year, is very considerable, especially in able bodied men and women; the number in the month of October not being half as great as in the month of February preceding. Thus, the number of able bodied men in the Irish workhouses in the week ending the 14th of October, 1854, was 3,793; while, in the week ending on the 4th of February, 1854, it was 10,348; and in the week ending on the 24th of February, 1855, it was 7,735. The total number of paupers in each of the same three periods was, in round numbers, 70,000 for October, 1854; 116,000 for February, 1854; and 100,000 for February, 1855. The returns for the week ending the 23rd September, 1855, the latest period to which I have

been able to procure information, shew a further diminution in the number of paupers, viz., 56,517 as the number in the workhouse, against 66,697 in the corresponding week of 1854, being a diminution of 10,180 in the course of the year. A proportional decrease may be observed in the number receiving out-door relief, which is now reduced to about 150. It is true that the high price of provisions has prevented the poor rates from undergoing a corresponding reduction. The expense of maintaining each pauper is, owing to the high price of provisions, about 36 per cent more than it was during the year 1851 and 1852; notwithstanding which, the whole amount raised for poor rates is less than one million sterling. The sum does not appear large when compared with other sums collected in a different manner for a similar purpose.

It is stated on good authority (which has never, that I am aware of, been controverted), that upwards of a million sterling is each year sent home to the poor in Ireland by their friends and relatives abroad. I extract the following passage from Thom's Almanack:-- "The emigration from Ireland since 1847 has been carried on chiefly by remittances from those who had previously emigrated, and the Commissioners give the following statement of the amount of those remittances, which afford so honorable a testimony of the self-denial and affectionate disposition of the Irish. The contributions, either in the form of pre-paid passages or of money sent home by the Irish were returned to us as [I omit the previous years] in 1851, upwards of £990,000; in 1852, upwards of £1,404,000; and in 1853, upwards of £1,430,000." These sums shew that the sum raised by compulsory assessment from Irish property for the support of the Irish poor, is less than the sum voluntarily contributed for the same purpose by the Irish emigrants abroad, who, both in wealth and numbers, bear a very small proportion to the contributors to the poor rates.

Another circumstance noticed in the report, and which must tend to allay our apprehensions of the evil of hereditary pauperism, is the number of young persons not exceeding the age of 18 who leave the workhouse permanently, never to return. This number has exceeded 200,000 in the six years ending in 1854. Of these, no doubt, many have emigrated, but many must have procured permanent employment for themselves at home. We must remember that the emigrants, with few exceptions, must, in order to enable them to emigrate, have earned a comparatively large sum in addition to the cost of their support. It may be urged in reply, that our criminal records might furnish some explanation of the manner in which these persons obtain their support; but I believe that such is not the case. Of course, there will always be a considerable intercourse between the workhouse and the jail. Want of forbearance from present enjoyment and want of steady industry frequently lead to want, and want frequently leads to crime. Want increases the temptation to crime, while criminal habits are a certain road to want. But although it must therefore happen frequently, that the same person is at one time an inmate of the workhouse and at another time of the jail, this is not likely to be the case with the young persons who leave the workhouse never to

return. The absence is but temporary of those paupers who leave the workhouse, and pursue a course of crime. Their permanent absence seems to imply a course of steady and successful industry.

Another gratifying circumstance noticed in the report of the commissioners is, the rise which has taken place in the remuneration of that sort of labour which in Ireland was the most abundant, and was the worst paid. This increase in the wages of agricultural labour has been going on steadily, but almost imperceptibly, for some years; and now it amounts to about 50 per cent. on the former rate of wages. The report, after stating the returns made by the inspectors from many parts of Ireland, thus sums up the results:—"It is thus attested that universally throughout Ireland a more continuous state of employment of agricultural labour prevails, and that wages of one shilling per day are given where formerly the rate was four pence, six pence, or eight pence; while, in most parts of the country, a man's wages reach one shilling and sixpence, two shillings, or two shillings and sixpence per day at certain seasons of the year. We believe that to these facts another important element of an improved condition may be added. We allude to the greatly increased demand for the labour of females and young persons of both sexes, which materially assists in rendering the income of an average family more proportioned to their physical wants than it was formerly, notwithstanding the present very high price of the necessaries of life." Although this report does not assert that the condition of the labourer is yet what it ought to be, or what it may reasonably be expected hereafter to become, it shews a state of things which presents a striking contrast to the former condition of Ireland, as proved by authentic documents of very recent date. I shall, for obvious reasons, refer only to such as were made previous to the famine of 1846. Indeed, a comparison of the present year with any year since the famine would only prove that Ireland was recovering from the effects of that disaster, but would be quite consistent with the opinion that the improvement would cease as soon as the country returned to that which had been its average state before the year 1846. I shall therefore refer to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tenure and Occupation of Land in Ireland, which was printed in the preceding year. From this report I extract the following paragraph:—"In adverting to the condition of the different classes of occupiers of Ireland, we notice with deep regret the state of the cottiers and labourers in most parts of the country, arising from the want of continuous employment. It would be impossible to describe adequately the privations which they and their families habitually and patiently endure. It will be seen in the evidence, that in many districts their only food is the potato, their only beverage water; that their cabins are seldom a protection against the weather; that a bed or blanket is a rare luxury, and that nearly in all their pig and manure heap constitute their only property."

This strong statement is fully supported by the evidence, which also shows that in many districts it was difficult for a labourer to procure employment at the low rate of sixpence a day. We find landlords, gentlemen holding a high social condition in their counties, stating (as proof that they were not oppressors of the poor) that

they were willing to pay sixpence a day to their tenantry, when they required their labour. We find the utility of new roads deserted upon; and, among other circumstances, that the poor labourers were working on them at six-pence a day. This seems to have been the ordinary state of things in parts of Connaught; but extreme cases are stated, where men would be willing to work for four-pence a day if they could get regular employment at that rate for even two days in the week.

The reports from the poor-law inspectors show that the average wages in those districts are now double what they were in 1845; that throughout Ireland wages have increased about forty per cent.; and that the increase is still going on. It is not easy to form an adequate idea of the increased means of happiness arising from even a small increase of wages to the labouring classes. Every additional penny relieves some pressing want, or places some additional enjoyment within the reach of millions. We are not to consider it as any set-off against this blessing, that there is some complaint of the scarcity of labourers, and that there is sometimes some difficulty in procuring an adequate supply. This state of things is implied from an increasing rate of wages. You cannot have at the same time the rate of wages increasing, and good labourers idle and seeking for employment. When wages reach their maximum rate, there will be no difficulty in procuring good workmen to work for good wages.

However, although the balance of advantages is immensely on the side of high wages, still an increase of wealth, which to the rich is often only a snare, is even to the poor not always an unmixed good. It does not always happen that the respectability of the workman, or the comfort of his family, is in proportion to his wages; although without good wages comfort and respectability are scarcely within his reach. His natural wants are so pressing, that it seems difficult for him to avoid making a good use of his means. But we know that it is otherwise. He may procure better clothes, better food, better lodging for himself and for his family; he may have more hours to rest from his toil, more time to spend in mental improvement or innocent enjoyment; but he has also more means of getting drunk, and of spending more time in vicious idleness, or among worthless associates. Here it is that the community to which he belongs may come to his aid. Not that it can altogether restrain him by sumptuary laws or prohibitory enactments; he must be left a free agent, which implies the possibility of his going wrong; but it may do much to lead his wishes in a right direction, as it has done much to lead them astray. At present, when wages rise, he is beset with temptations to misapply the means of enjoyment thus placed within his reach. It is frequently made a subject of remark, that a very good workman is often an idle, drunken fellow, whose dissolute habits make it impossible for any employer to calculate on his services for any length of time, and that his fortune was apt to be less prosperous than that of inferior workmen. This ought not to be the case. There is no natural reason why a well paid workman should be more prone to vicious indulgence than his wealthier and idler neighbour. What is it that constitutes the difference between them in this respect? It is not poverty, or, more correctly speaking, the

absence of accumulated wealth ; for the term poverty is not correctly applicable to the condition of any man in full employment, merely because he is obliged to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. But whatever temptations beset the man whose poverty is so extreme as to make existence itself precarious, few, I believe, would seriously assert that the moral or spiritual condition of the labourer is naturally inferior to that of his neighbour who is clothed in purple and fine linen, and who fares sumptuously every day. Indeed, so far as his temptations proceed from poverty, every increase of his wages should tend to remove them. But, if it is not poverty, still less is it likely that the necessity of labour is the circumstance which exposes him to temptation. We have all heard that idleness is the mother of mischief, but no one ever heard of industry being placed in the pedigree of vice or folly.

What then is the reason why, when wages rise, an increase of drunkenness is too often the result. If you asked an ordinary person the reason, you would probably get the rough and ready answer, that the workmen have nothing else to do with their money. The political economist would perhaps deny this, and shew they could advantageously save some of their wages, and lay up a provision for their family or for thier own old age ; something which, if prosperity last, would place them permanently in a higher condition of life, or which should be a resource to support them if adverse times should deprive them of employment, or reduce their wages. This view of the matter is, however, a very partial one. I had the pleasure of once hearing a lecture from our President, on the effects produced on the heart and understanding by different professions. He shewed that there was frequently an illusion or source of error, intermediate between the *idola specus* and the *idola tribus* mentioned by Lord Bacon, being more general than the one, and less universal than the other ; not confined to any particular individual, nor yet common to the human race, but affecting generally those who follow some particular pursuit. Perhaps even political economists are not exempt from this source of error ; and if I were permitted to hint at it, I should say their prejudice would probably be to attach too much weight to the desire which exists among mankind for the accumulation of wealth. This prejudice does not tend to vitiate our reasoning while it is conversant only with questions of traffic and exchanges ; but, in other important problems, it will lead us very far astray. In many cases connected with the social welfare of the community, we have to consider numerous classes placed in circumstances in which the desire or hope of gradually accumulating wealth is so weak, as scarcely to deserve to be considered a principle of action ; and the legislator who relies much upon it will fall into many grievous errors. It is chiefly in that new department of enquiry introduced into this society, that problems occur which require for their solution something more than the ordinary principles of political economy ; as they depend not on the mere desire or capacity of man to make exchanges, but on the more subtle and complex qualities of his mental organization.

A great and most interesting problem for your consideration will be, what steps the state can take to direct, without coercing, the

tastes and habits of the labouring classes into the course most likely to be productive of happiness to themselves? What help can the state with safety give to assist them in the pursuit of innocent enjoyment? The expense ought not to be regarded, where anything can be done to improve their condition. The funds out of which such expenses may be defrayed can be readily obtained without imposing an additional burthen upon any class. I have already trespassed so much upon your time, that I will not venture to enter into details on this point. I shall only refer to some of them, premising that the labourers themselves will be both able and willing to contribute liberally to every scheme for their advantage. If they are required to contribute to the support of any institution, and to assist in its management, it will meet with more favor from them than anything in the support and management of which they have no part. The expenses, however great, may therefore be defrayed out of the money at present spent in the purchase of spirituous liquors, and out of the waste and loss occasioned by their use; out of the sums annually taken by thieves and robbers, and out of the expenses of guarding against them, of prosecuting them, and of maintaining them in prison. The reduction which might take place in the rates for the relief of the poor, would also leave a fund applicable to the prevention of pauperism, instead of to its relief.

Poor laws are viewed with apprehension by many political economists, as diminishing the inducements to a poor man to lead an industrious and frugal life, by insuring to him a support independent of his exertions. There is, doubtless, some weight in the objection; but in the moral sciences it is not necessary that we should either reject an argument as invalid, or submit to it as decisive. There may be, and, in the case of poor laws, the nation has decided that there are, more forcible arguments on the other side; and it only remains to administer those laws so as to secure the advantages which they were intended to confer; and at the same time, as far as possible, to avoid the evils apprehended from them. At present, the test most relied upon to prevent simulated, voluntary, or negligent reckless pauperism, is the necessity imposed upon the pauper of residing within the workhouse, and submitting to its regulations. The only sure way to increase the efficacy of this test, without harshness to those whom inevitable misfortune compels to submit to it, is by increasing the comfort, happiness, and respectability of those who support themselves by their own exertions. Wholesome, comfortable and cheerful lodgings, dry and airy public walks, innocent recreations, improved means of social intercourse, and intellectual gratification for the working classes, will be cheaply purchased at any price; for, independent of the direct happiness which they produce, they afford increased incentives to prudence and industry; they diminish the attractions of the dram shop, and increase the terrors of the workhouse and the jail.
