

THE ADDRESS

ON THE OPENING OF THE

FIFTH SESSION

OF

THE DUBLIN STATISTICAL SOCIETY,

DELIVERED BY

SIR ROBERT KANE,

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

TOGETHER WITH THE

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL,

READ AT THE ANNUAL MEETING, 19TH NOVEMBER, 1851.

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Dublin Statistical Society.

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THIS society was established in November, 1847, for the purpose of promoting the study of Statistical and Economical Science. The meetings are held on the third Monday in each month, from November till June, inclusive, at 8, P. M. The business is transacted by members reading written communications on subjects of Statistical and Economical Science. No communication is read unless two members of the council certify that they consider it in accordance with the rules and objects of the society. The reading of each paper, unless by express permission of the council previously obtained, is limited to *half an hour*.

Applications for leave to read papers should be made to the secretaries at least a *week* previous to the meeting.

Proposals of candidate members should be sent to the secretaries at least a *fortnight* previous to the meeting.

The subscription to the society is one pound entrance, and *ten shillings* per annum.

Report of the Address at the opening of the Fifth Session of the Dublin Statistical Society. Delivered by Sir Robert Kane, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society.

GENTLEMEN,

Honoured by the request of the council of this society that I should, as acting vice-president, open the business of this its fifth session with such observations as might serve to supplement the annual report which has been laid before our members, and should afford some explanation to our visitors as to the objects of the society, and the progress we have as yet made, I hasten to comply with the duties of a position in which my personal and legitimate appreciation of the honour conferred upon me does not blind me to its difficulties, or prevent me sincerely wishing that the cause of the society, and of the important departments of science which are its care, had been intrusted by the council to some more able advocate.

The principal object of this society is, as its name imports, the collection and digestion of all those classes of facts which come within the recognised, though somewhat indefinite domain of statistical inquiry, by affording information as to the finances of the state, the resources of our territory, the numbers, the condition, the habits, or the industry of the people. Such an object is, as you are aware, even by itself, worthy of the greatest effort, and calculated to produce the best effects. But the exertions of this society are not restricted even to that wide and important field of pure statistics. Our aims embrace also the cultivation of economical science in its full sense. As in the progress of physical study, so in the social sciences, whilst carefully collecting, and, where possible, reducing to numerical expressions, as many facts as possible, we must search after principle, and endeavour to bring the general laws thereby obtained to that practical test of truth—conformity with reality in nature. We therefore embrace in our objects, equally with statistics, that more abstract branch, political economy; which, but lately admitted to the sisterhood of science, imperfectly defined as yet even in the subjects it embraces or the objects which it has in view, regarded by turns as the mere art of accumulating money, and as the philosophy of government, changing with its writers from technical chrematistics to administrative politics, is yet agreed upon all hands to involve the considerations on which the material interests and worldly prosperity of nations must mainly rest; to have the most direct bearing upon the physical

welfare of the people, and consequently not merely to deserve, but to demand the best attention of all those who are interested in the peaceful prosperity and social progress of mankind.

Some persons have seen in the different opinions held by eminent writers, as to the extent and scope of the science we here cultivate, grounds for an hesitation as to its right to be considered as a real science, and would reduce its function to that of a practical political guide, having for its object a gross and mundane avarice, which would subordinate every consideration of country and of culture to the mere grovelling art of money getting. But in such limited conception of our aim there is involved most serious error. Putting aside the differences of opinion, as to whether political economy should limit itself, as a science, to the discussion of the mere laws of national wealth, or should extend itself to the wider consideration of national well-being—rejecting the questions as to the schools of Smith and Macculloch, or of Say, of Sismondi, and of Mill,—we can indicate, as defining and illustrating the natural position of our labours here, the function of collecting and arranging facts which constitute the branch of statistics; the search after abstract principles and general laws, with their strict logical consequences, which form the body of the true abstract science of political economy; and finally, the application of the strict principles of science to real life, subject to modifications which local circumstances will always indicate. There is thus within the scope of our inquiries a most interesting abstract science, and a most important practical art. To the philosopher and to the statesman—to the thinker, to the observer, and to the man of action,—political economy presents itself, thus, one yet tripartite, fraught with the questions most vital to civilized man, pregnant with the interests and with the destinies of nations.

That this society has adopted for its object the comprehensive definition of statistical and economical science—which, as I have said, comports with the dignity of the subject—is proved by the catalogue of topics discussed at its several meetings during the past year; and a succinct analysis of the papers which have been contributed by members of our society will serve to point out, though but imperfectly, how much we owe to the activity and talents of those gentlemen. On looking to those papers I find some which regard revenue and finance; others discussing the moral condition and progress of the people; some having reference specially to the conditions promoting or retarding improvement in this country; others again illustrating by numerical facts the progress of industry in this and in other countries. In each of these classes we have had valuable contributions.

The principles of taxation have been discussed, and the relative merits and demerits of direct and indirect taxation, have been ably considered in papers by Professor Hancock and by Mr. Hogan; whilst the special disadvantages and injustice of certain sources of revenue have been illustrated by the papers of Professor Heron on

the taxes on the administration of justice, and by Dr Hancock on the cost of patents for inventions. The injustice, in a country dependent more than all others for its place among nations on the rapid advance of mechanical and chemical invention, that there should be imposed for patents a tax of more than five times the amount paid for similar concessions in other countries, needs no remark; and, since Dr. Hancock's paper was read, steps have been taken to lighten the expense, and simplify the forms of obtaining patents. My friend Professor Heron has most logically pointed out how, in defraying the cost of administering justice by taxes levied on those who are driven to seek for justice, we inflict the double and anomalous injury, that, whilst by the decision of one case the rights of the general community are vindicated and affirmed, we charge the entire cost of that which is public good upon the individuals who, by the omissions or obscurities of those that had framed the laws, were suffering the anxieties of litigation. To Professor Hancock's paper on the "General Principles of Taxation," I can refer for a clear and succinct view of the grounds on which the assessment of the public revenue should be apportioned. On the grave and important questions of financial policy therein involved I shall not enter; I would suggest, however, that in judging of M. Say's opinions on the subject, from the quotation of a few words given by Maculloch, my friend Professor Hancock has scarcely done justice to that eminent economist. By reference to M. Say's own works, and especially to his last great work, the *Cours d'Economie Politique*, edited by his son, it will be found that it is not to the absence of taxation, but to the judicious and economical administration of its funds,—it is not to the absolute lowness of the tax, but to its moderation, relative to the objects necessary for national dignity and safety,—that M. Say refers that epigrammatic phrase which Mr. Maculloch has transcribed, and narrowed by association with his own doctrines.

The interest felt by our members in the moral and material welfare of the artisan and poorer classes, is fully shown by our proceedings. In a memoir on the "Self-dependance of the Working Classes under the Law of Competition," Mr. Leshe has criticized the fallacies by which our working classes are so much misled as to the effects of capital and free trade in labour. On no point is it of more vital importance that sound information should be universally diffused, than as to the relative advantages of the co-operative and competitive principles, a subject on which, even in the wealthier classes of society, so much and so mischievous ignorance exists. A paper "On the Connexion of Ignorance, Intemperance, and Crime," one also "On the Benefits to the Working Classes from Improvements in Machinery," have been contributed by our benevolent and active member, Mr. James Haughton. And in his hands those subjects acquire peculiar interest, as he is known by the artisan class for their best friend—a chief support of their Mechanics' Institute. His words will have weight where the assertions of a professed eco-

nomist might be received with doubt and suspicion. The memoir by Mr. Hussey Walsh, "On the Relation between the Moral Training and the Material Welfare of the Industrious Classes," merits, in my opinion, the fullest attention of the public. He has well indicated the results of the division of labour and of mechanical improvements on the condition of the workman, and has shown how to preserve the proper position of the workman, by augmenting his intellectual and moral force to control, as the material instrument increases its productive power. The machine must displace the man, if the man does not maintain himself above the machine. As Mr. Walsh has shown, the artisan class, to live and support their families in that condition which alone will secure contentment and public peace, must for the future be provided with that education which will fit them to guide and control that great mechanical system after which they now toil in fruitless rivalry. Mechanism should be the servant of man, and not man be subject to the machine. Soundly and philosophically has Mr. Walsh shown the necessity for an organised plan of industrial education adapted to the social requirements of the industrious classes; and I deem it most fortunate for educational progress and for economic science, that in the University where most of us have spent our student years, and for which we feel such reference and affection, Mr. Walsh has been appointed to the professorship of political economy, founded by the liberality of our learned and most reverend President.

It was only natural that, under the painful condition of this country during the last few years the attention of our members should have been attracted to the economic causes of her depression and the means indicated by science for her recovery. Several interesting papers, especially regarding Ireland, have been read during the past year. Mr. Lysaght has discussed the common idea that the destitution of our agricultural classes arises from the excessive competition for the possession of land, to which they are compelled by the absence of other means of existence. He proves that in such commonly held opinion the effect is mistaken for the cause. He shows that by the embarrassments, settlements, and complex tenures of the landlords, tenants of capital and responsibility cannot be induced to offer themselves; and that by such absence of competition the owners of land are thrown back upon the mere peasantry, without capital or agricultural knowledge, who can only supply the class of tenantry so much objected to. The fault, as Mr. Lysaght proves, is in the laws regulating the sale and descent of land; and he indicates, as the direct remedy, to render land an easily marketable commodity, of which the embarrassed, over-burdened, nominal owners could be disentangled, their creditors satisfied, and the soil made available to an active and substantially provided class, who, as owners or as tenants, could apply the means of an improved agriculture. The same question in special application has been discussed by Dr. Hancock, in his paper "On the Cause of the Distress in Skull and Skibbereen during the recent Famine." From the tenure of land throughout that district, it appears that no

other state of things could be expected. Reckless improvidence by the landlord, with gross and anomalous defects in the law, induced as an economic necessity that destitution, which elicited from our wealthier neighbours a practical sympathy for which we must feel grateful, and demonstrated the necessity for a profound change in the system by which such miseries were brought about.

Dawning on the horizon of our hopes, the light which heralds to us the promised day of social amelioration is shown in the next paper by Dr. Hancock, "On the Statistics of the Sales of Incumbered Estates." In this memoir, which is by no means purely statistical, the author inquires—firstly, as to whether the legal measures for facilitating the sale of incumbered estates were called for by the necessity of the time; secondly, whether the public confidence has been accorded to the execution of those measures; thirdly, whether the estates sold have brought fair prices; and fourthly, as to the causes of certain differences in the prices realized. No person can read Professor Hancock's *resume* of the delays, expenses, and uncertainties attending the older methods of dealing with landed property, without according their full assent to the necessity for the establishment of the new system; and it is fully evidenced that, throwing aside the web of fictitious, or at least unrealizable rentals, usually attached to Irish estates, and measuring the prices obtained by the official values of the net interests, especially making allowance for the change in value of landed property, which has occurred not merely in this country but throughout the empire, the sums realized have fairly represented the commercial values. There have been neither alarming sacrifices nor extraordinary bargains, and therein is to be found the explanation of the fact, at first regretted, that only few from the sister kingdom have become purchasers. We have done better. From our own capital, previously dormant and profitless, have come the resources from which our commercial and farming classes are obtaining the absolute ownership of the land; giving to us the nucleus of an intelligent, industrious, and independent yeoman proprietary, and realizing what has been the prayer of every friend of Ireland—the substitution of a race of valid middle-class proprietors for those who, usually excellent in intention, were so fettered by hereditary position and heir-loom incumbrances—so bound up in the forms of feudal proprietorship, after the reality had departed—that they sustained existence, parasitic on the industrious classes only by such means as accelerated and rendered more complete their final fall. It will be of great interest to follow up Dr. Hancock's paper by an analysis of the sales that have occurred since it was written; but we may fully regard the institution of those measures for the sale of incumbered estates as the commencement of a healthy and active system of property in Ireland. *Esto perpetua!*

Following up that useful contribution, Dr. Hancock has further discussed the question as to the want of capital in Ireland, and has arrived at the same conclusion with former inquirers, (as Dr. Longfield and myself) viz. that the evil of Ireland, as regards capital, is

not its deficiency, but the absence of that spirit of enterprize which would secure its active and profitable circulation. With £38,000,000 of Irish money invested in the public funds, besides the sums in other kinds of investments that are available, we may be sure that if landed property in Ireland should yet be sold below its value, it is not for want of capitalists in Ireland able to buy it. In the memoir I now refer to, my friend Dr. Hancock, quoting the evidence which I had supplied as to the capital available in Ireland, suggests that in using the expression "labour is capital—intelligence is capital," I had departed from the strictness of definition which should become a scientific economist. I fully appreciate the dialectic precision of my friend, but I would explain that I had used the phrase not as a definition, but as an encouragement. I had proved that we had money capital. I wished to point out that by properly applying labour which was unemployed, and intelligence which was misdirected throughout the country, our capital could be effectively increased in force and utility for all practical purposes. Were I, however, even considering the nature of capital in a scientific point of view, I should not feel justified in excluding all consideration of labour and skill. That labour is not merely one, but the first great source of capital, will, I believe, meet with but few dissentients. That intelligence, by which labour is heightened in force and increased in efficiency, becomes the means of increasing the capital produced, is scarcely to be denied; and, although knowing the danger of an elliptical or epigrammatic phraseology in so logical an assembly, I would adopt the expression of Jean Baptiste Say, and consider man, in respect to his labouring force and his intelligence, as an accumulated capital.

We are indebted to our indefatigable secretary for yet another valuable contribution to economic science, on the important question whether pauper labour can be self supporting. Professor Hancock ably and clearly shows that, if it be contemplated to bring the produce of pauper labour into the market, and to compete with the labour of independent workmen, the plan violates the conditions for economic success, and in practice could only lead to loss and disappointment. But I apprehend that Dr. Hancock does not dispute the great importance of keeping the inmates of a workhouse fully employed—that they shall not be fed in idleness upon the earnings of the industrious classes—that there shall not be placed a bounty upon inaction and dependance. The experience of the Cork workhouse, where, owing to the industrial system, the great mass of pauperism thrown upon that city by the late famine has been alleviated, and its financial pressure materially lightened, appears decidedly to establish that, within prudent limits, and under careful supervision, the inmates of our workhouses may be employed with benefit to the community, by effecting a reduction in local burdens, and acquiring habits of industry, which may enable them to earn an independent livelihood after their discharge.

But one paper more, read before this society, will require notice—

that by Dr. Lawson, "On the Statistics of Agriculture in the United States." I allude to this paper as, even independent of its intrinsic merits, I would wish to point the attention of our members to the great value of bringing before this society, and the Irish public, the best information possible regarding the condition and progress of other countries. Every day, by increasing facilities of intercourse, and by removing the obstructions of mistaken laws, the several nations are becoming more closely connected as to their commercial and political interest. At every moment it is of special value to be informed as to their condition, as we must guide our future course, not by the narrow knowledge of our locality, or even of our own country, as in former days, but by the calculations of those wider interests and influences with which our measures are indissolubly involved. I would therefore suggest to our members that in no way could more useful information be supplied to our community than in that of which Dr. Lawson's paper is an example. I would even recommend it under another point of view. We have seen in the papers read, the most profound questions of economic and social science have been raised, and honestly and well discussed; and thereby have our members afforded proof at once of their own talents and of the high and extended view which they adopt of the objects of economic science and of this society. But I conceive it would be of great advantage in this country to inculcate habits of calm and careful collection of facts, and the discussion and balancing of numerical results. If a tendency to strict arithmetic could be diffused among us, it would produce excellent fruit; and therefore, even though we might have to postpone the discussion of weighty but abstract topics, I would suggest that we here could set a highly useful example, by more fully developing the statistical element of our society—that element, indeed, which confers upon us our peculiar name.

Such have been the papers read by our members here, and as representing us in the statistical section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science; but such, however, have been only a part of the labours of the society and of its members. You are aware that, by the liberality of Mr. Barrington, as reported in former proceedings, lecturers chosen by the council of this society are sent to diffuse a knowledge of economic principles throughout the country. During the past year, the gentlemen selected have discharged their duties with admirable efficiency; and from the list of localities which have had the benefit of their instructions, you will observe on how great a scale the benevolent intentions of the founder of that liberal endowment have been carried out. Courses of lectures have been delivered by Professor Moffett at Dungannon, at Ardee, at Armagh, and in Dublin—usually to the Mechanics' Institutes or other literary societies of those places. Professor Hearn has lectured at Waterford, Professor Walsh at Drogheda, and Mr. Jenkins at Lurgan. And it affords most gratifying proof of the desire for economic knowledge, that in every case the lecturers

were received with cordiality, and on their departure gratefully thanked. Where all gave such satisfaction, I should not particularize, but from the peculiar evidence of progress afforded by some facts. The artisans of Dublin at first refused to have lectures on political economy in their Mechanics' Institute; however, they gradually changed their mind, and at last, by a small majority, Professor Moffett was invited to lecture to them. Our Orpheus of economics charmed and tamed down those rough but intelligent sons of industry. They proffered to him at the end of his course of lectures their grateful thanks for his instructions, and they said they had been told that political economy was adverse to the interests of the working man, but he had proved to them the reverse. The gentlemen I have named have also delivered each a lecture before the Mutual Improvement Association of the Society of Friends in Dublin—a community which, active in all objects of educational or social improvement, has yielded uniform and valuable support to this society. Further courses of lectures on political economy have been delivered by Dr. Lawson at Enniskillen, and also at Tuam, to a literary institution recently established in that town, and from which most beneficial results to that locality may be expected; for there also most convincing evidence of growing enlightenment was afforded by a public meeting to thank Dr. Lawson on the close of his course of lectures, at which the people of Tuam, in the eloquent words of Mr. Kyle, declared:—"We thirsted for information, and the perennial fountains of knowledge were opened to us; we sought for strength, and the Statistical Society came to our assistance."

This branch of the activity of the society we owe to Mr. Barrington's bequest; but the sense of what was even further desirable for the advancement of economic and social knowledge in this country has given origin even to another department of this society, as I may term it, although possessing an existence formally independent. The assistance given and the papers read to this society being purely voluntary, and therefore the subjects selected at the will of the writers, and as their leisure permits, and the function of the Barrington lecturers being specially popular and confined to the elucidation of the topics and principles of the established code of economic science, it was considered by our eminent President, and by the other members of the society, that means should be obtained for instituting inquiries into such economic and social questions as might appear to be of great public or scientific interest. It was also considered advisable to separate the finance and administration of such inquiries from the ordinary business of this society, and accordingly what is termed "The Society for Promoting Scientific Inquiries into Social Questions," has been formed. By means of that department reports have been already obtained from Mr. Robert Longfield on the alterations most desirable in the laws respecting the relations of landlord and tenant, and by Mr. Lawson on the patent laws. It is enough to mention these subjects to show their importance; and the

society has indicated in its report other most useful inquiries, which are in hand. I need scarcely say how fully I appreciate the value of this organised system of social investigation. It has an immense advantage over a system of prize essays, that the author is selected for his work on the ground of special qualification, and his duty is therefore certain to be done well. The plan has much resemblance to that adopted by the French government after the French revolution of 1848, to correct the false and anarchial ideas then advanced, by publishing a series of little books on economic subjects, many of which are excellent, as might be expected from the names of their distinguished authors; and we have reason to feel with gratitude the difference of our position, that whilst in that beautiful country the simplest principles of social economy and civilization are subjects of deep error and debate, while property trembles for its existence, and liberty exists but as a name, we, safe under the shelter of our free institutions, tranquilly organize scientific inquiries to investigate such imperfections of detail as they may contain, and by timely reform preserve the permanent security of our noble, time-honoured, and liberal constitution.

Such, gentlemen, have been the works of your society during the past year. If even, in the maimed and imperfect sketch which only I can pretend to give, they appear such as you may look back upon with pride, and the public receive with favour, you will have but incurred a responsibility, by such pledges for future exertion in the same field to sustain the reputation so far and so honorably earned.

Although at this meeting we must consider the labours of the Statistical Society as the topic specially claiming our attention, it would be improper, in noticing the advance of statistical and economic science, to omit reference to the important Statistical operations which are just now in progress by her Majesty's Government, and to the valuable statistical information that is being accumulated in the reports of the several public departments in this country. I shall notice such, but with abrupt brevity, as I fear that, notwithstanding their intrinsic interest and importance, the topic may in my hands become wearisome by dry detail.

The excellence of plan of the Irish census of 1841, which rendered that document the most valuable and complete statistical document of its time in the British empire, was due, as many here well know, to the untiring industry and genius of our esteemed vice-president, Major Larcom, assisted for the important branch of vital statistics by our learned associate, Mr Wilde. To Major Larcom is also due the organization of the returns of agricultural produce, now annually presented to parliament from this country, and instituted by the direction of his Excellency the Earl of Clarendon, whose far-seeing and practical statesmanship had recognised the necessity for the governors of the people having accurate information as to how the population is to live. By the recurrence of the decennial period the census of our population is this year again made; and as the health of Major Larcom, so precious

a treasure to his country, did not admit of his undertaking that great work, I deem it fortunate that its accomplishment should have devolved on gentlemen so eminently qualified—on Mr. Donnelly, who, as Registrar-General, is so conversant with the organization and discussion of statistical returns—and on Mr. Wilde, who, guided by the valuable experience of his previous labours, has, as I believe, arranged for giving even greater development in the present census to the departments of sanitary and vital statistics, and will thereby doubtless throw most useful light on the state of our population as to physical condition, to disease and death. Already some of the general results of the enumeration have been made known; already is the unprecedented fact established, that since the last census we have lost by deaths and emigration one and a half million of the inhabitants of this country—that the population is at the present moment less numerous than thirty years ago, and we have reason to believe that the diminution has not by any means ceased to progress. In this result, the importance of which is beyond comment, we must recognise the concurrent elements of the frightful mortality consequent on the famine, with the attendant deficiency in births and marriages, and, in perhaps a more eminent degree influential, the transmigration to the western hemisphere of our agricultural population. Those elements of our loss of numbers deserve, as I believe, to be looked upon with varied feelings. No person who was conversant with the condition of Ireland during the years 1846, 1847, and 1848, can ever forget the miseries of combined want and disease by which our people were prostrated. Not throughout history is there recorded a more absolute annihilation of the means of existence of a people; never were the resources of public and private charity more lavishly or more sympathizingly afforded, than to mitigate the miseries of that terrible infliction. Nowhere in history can there be found a picture of more patient endurance under suffering—of more respect for property among the pangs of starvation—of stricter conformity to order and to the law under the most maddening temptations of despair; and it is heart-rending to consider that such a people, so rich in the elements of undeveloped national greatness, should find themselves in their own land paralysed of exertion and destitute of hope; that, carrying to another hemisphere the activity, the energy, the intelligence, and the wealth which, suitably applied, should transform our wastes to Edens, they present to us the picture so feelingly pourtrayed by Goldsmith:—

“ Scourged by famine from the smiling land,
The mournful peasant leads his humble band,
And, while he sinks without an arm to save,
The country blooms a garden and a grave.”

But it is consoling to recollect that under the western sun there awaits our wanderers that certainty of reward for honest industry which has been found so doubtful here; and looking also to the

results on Ireland of this gigantic emigration, the prospect is not of an unvarying gloom. Afflicting as have been those causes of our decrease of numbers, the best friends of the Irish people will recognise, that by the increased value thereby conferred upon the labourer, and by the facilities thereby afforded for an improved agriculture, our country promises, if not all that we should wish to see, at least to emerge from that poverty and despair which had engulfed us. Thus, from the sufferings we have passed through, we may hope to extract the remedies which shall preserve us for a renewed and invigorated national existence, and even in the darkness of that calamitous period trace on the horizon some gleams of genial brightness warming our hopes and giving us promise of a cheerful future.

I would beg leave to remark in a very few words upon one element in the construction of our census, to which I feel that public attention cannot be too strongly directed. I refer to those tables of births, deaths, and marriages, for obtaining the elements of which forms are provided in the present census. Now I would express my opinion that, although the returns may be expected to represent accurately the existing facts, similar accuracy cannot be expected in returns of the occurrences spread over a period of ten years. These facts, still more important to the civil administration for securing the ends of justice and morality, than from any merely statistical object, would require to be registered at the time of their occurrence in a proper and secure official manner, and thereby at the end of the decennial period would afford a means of controlling the general census returns by the sums of the annual increments and decrements of the population independently obtained. Such returns are made for Great Britain, and for all the important European countries. I, of course, cannot judge of the reasons for omitting in this country the official registration of births and deaths; nor indeed for the anomaly of limiting the registration of marriages to those of a portion, and indeed a small portion of the people. The want of official registration of the marriages of the great mass of the inhabitants of this country I look upon as not merely destroying all value in the returns of our talented Registrar-General, as statistical documents, but also as a great injury and injustice to those classes of her Majesty's subjects, who are thus deprived of an important safeguard to their property, and to the moral position of their families. I have had occasion to consult upon the question of registration of marriages with a great number of gentlemen—clergymen as well as laymen—and I have never met with one whose experience did not furnish cases of violation to justice and injury to morals, as to persons and as to property, from the absence of central, official, and general registries of births, deaths, and marriages, and who did not unequivocally deplore and condemn the very imperfect, irresponsible, and unsafe manner in which the only kinds of registries usual among those I consulted are now drawn up and deposited. All I have spoken with have expressed

their great anxiety that a general system of public official registration of births, deaths, and marriages, should be organized; and as in a merely statistical point of view such would be of great utility to advance the objects of our society, I felt that in this assembly a reference to the necessity for supplying a want so universally deplored could not be out of place.

I have referred to the returns of agricultural produce, prepared hitherto under the directions of Major Larcom, but which this year are being embodied in the general operations of the census. I notice again those most useful indexes of the condition of agriculture and of subsistence in this country, that I may connect them with the kindred and even more important estimates of financial value of the agricultural soil, progressing under the able direction of our associate, Dr. Griffith, and which promises to furnish to this country the most systematic, homogeneous, and impartial statistic of agricultural values of land that has been as yet obtained in any country. Corrected for changes in the average standard of value, and allowing for those special details of local peculiarity inevitably found in every operation of territorial or civil magnitude—corrections and allowances, introduced with minute and impartial care by its eminent director—the official valuation of Ireland will take its place in statistical and geographical science, as in social and financial administration, as the ground-work of every trustworthy estimate of the productive resources of the Irish soil, or of the financial capabilities of the people: and the existence of an official and general valuation, apart from and above all local influences or objects, becomes of paramount interest when we consider how much of evil and ill-will was caused in Ireland, from ignorance of the real value of land. It would outrage the first principles of society, were the state to interfere with the free agency of those who would sell or buy the ownership or usufruct of the soil; but the state may powerfully promote the fair and straightforward dealing of the parties, by having supplied a public, official, and impartial table of values, by which, if the one demands or the other pays more than the value, it will be manifest that there enter into the bargain other considerations with which the question of rent value is not to be confounded.

It must suffice that I point out to the members of this society the abundant stores of statistical details, and of valuable data for the most important questions of economical science, to be found in the returns and reports prepared by the several public departments in this country. The discipline and population of prisons, the statistics of crime and justice, the statistics and administration of our institutions for the relief of sickness and of poverty, will all afford ample materials for analysis and discussion. The reports of the Board of National Education present the statistics of primary instruction in a form equally creditable to the officers of that excellent board and gratifying to the country; and after a little it may be hoped that a body of information, as to superior instruc-

tion, will be afforded by the reports of the Queen's Colleges, and of the Queen's University, which shall also merit the approbation of the public. If it were possible to extend even still further the system of publication of the statistics of the departments of the public service, it might be of great service to science; and this society, above all individual interests, yet representing all public interests, might well suggest those points on which it is most desirable that additional information should be officially afforded.

I have to thank the society and this assembly for the attention with which this imperfect *resume* of our labours during the past year has been received. I have not, as you may have remarked, been so happy as that my own name should find place in that catalogue of honour of which I am but the formal chronicler. You will not, I am sure, attribute that omission to absence of sympathy with the objects of this society, or want of zeal in the cultivation of our science. Absorbing occupation in different but kindred fields of progress has debarred me from participating as much as I should have wished in your general business, and benefiting, as I should have done, by the rich and varied information of your discussions. I hope, however, that in future I shall be more fortunate, and shall be able at least with moderate regularity to attend our meetings

And, gentlemen, in reference to our future meetings, for which so happy an augury is afforded by the fulness of last year's results, I would remind you that our position is not exactly such as in a society formed for discovery in mere abstract science. That if, on the one hand, we may rise by the study of abstract economic principles to the most universal laws of social existence, yet, on the other hand, our science should present merely an aggregate of elevations—sublime, but barren—lustrous, but incapable of yielding profit or sustenance to man, were those principles not reduced to the details of practical and local application, did not a careful study of the condition and resources of our own country and of its people, based on a diligent collection and arrangement of statistical facts, afford substantial basis for our generalization and practical tests for the soundness of our theoretical ideas. It is thus that we erect parallel with the abstract science the practical art of political economy—each having at bottom the same object—the one treating it in a more general, the other in a more local manner, as modified by circumstances; but as our science advances, as civilization proceeds, those local conditions, separating practice from theory, will lose their importance; and the distinction, which to-day we must insist upon, lest science should be blamed for errors and anomalies that arise from the forces which obstruct its legitimate course, will, as I trust, become less frequent and less absolute. The belief that we can at any time apply the rigorous dogmas of abstract political economy to human society, regardless of personal and local habits, and even prejudices, is utopian; but we can trace that every day these obstacles diminish, and that industrial and moral progress

tends more and more to harmonise practice and science. Fully recognising political economy as the science of public wealth, we must yet, in applying its principles to legislature, never forget that to a people other considerations than those of wealth may have value, and even predominant value. "For," in the words of that statesman and economist, whose violent and premature death caused such a loss to science and to Europe—in the words of Rossi, "Man has more than one object to attain in this world. Political economy may serve to guide us towards one object, but it has no mission to compel us to any course, for science has no proper object but the inquiry after truth. It is in the application that we must take into account all the conditions which must concur to the solution of a social problem. Our errors arise from our imagining that every social question is resolvable by means of a single principle. From thence it comes, that every time the economic principle is implicated in a question, attempts are made to rest the practical solution on political economy. Political economy affords economical results, mere consequences of economic principles. It is for legislators, for statesmen, to take into account the numerous other principles that should concur, in order that the question may be solved conformably to the best interests of individuals and of the country."

Those principles, thoroughly understood, will at once vindicate the authority, and justify the application of our science. To our own country, where the neglect of economic principles has been the cause of so much individual suffering, and of so much national loss, the proper appreciation of the dignity and utility of political economy is of paramount importance, and it is most fortunate that in no country are there in action more extended or more effectual agencies for diffusing economical information. The eminent prelate who dignifies the presidency of this society by his genius and by his rank, has by his salutary influence on the courses of the National Schools, and by his munificent endowment of the professorship in Trinity College, secured that means shall be afforded of teaching political economy to all classes of society; and in his capacity as senator of the National University, founded by our beloved Queen, our president has effectively co-operated to introduce, as a portion of undergraduate education, the principles of political economy, of jurisprudence, and of statistics, for teaching which professorships have been founded in the Queen's Colleges.

With such high objects, and with such ample means, we may feel confident that the period of social ignorance and economic error has nearly passed away in Ireland, and that we shall soon participate in the worldly prosperity and moral grandeur secured to the sister kingdom, by conduct based upon economic laws, and guided by generous liberality. It is time we should learn that not by isolation of locality, or exclusiveness of class—not by selfishness of interests or monopoly of power—can the basis of permanent prosperity for our country be laid, or the means of improvement for our people

be established; but that in kindness of feeling and association of interests with even the most distant of our fellow-men—in freedom of intercourse and of exchanges, and in the removal of those restraints which press upon industry, and limit the distribution of its fruits—is to be found the avenue to material welfare for our country. Yes, in the spread of that enlightenment, by which our natural resources may be developed and our commerce vivified—by which simplicity may be given to our laws and harmony to our social interests—by which our manners may be refined and the faith of our people crowned with an ardent and mutual charity—we must seek the elements of future prosperity for Ireland, as therein only can we find the combination of moral and material progress, that sublime and holy union, which is the true wealth of nations.

Report of the Council read at the Annual Meeting, November 19th, 1851.

At the commencement of the fifth session since the formation of the society, the council have much pleasure in congratulating the members on the progress which the society has made, and on the position which it now occupies.

During the past session, eight meetings were held, at which fourteen papers were read, by twelve members. The subjects of these papers included some of the leading questions connected with the social condition of Ireland, or suggested by the present state of statistical and economical science.

Of these papers the council selected the greater number for publication, and they were issued in the separate form which has been found by the experience of this society to be so satisfactory.

The council also selected for publication some papers read by one of its members at the Statistical Section of the British Association, in pursuance of the rule by which such papers are entitled to publication under the same arrangements as the papers read before the society.

Next to the ordinary business of the society, the most important part of the duties of the council is in connexion with the Barrington lectures on political economy, which the trustees continue to confide to the management of the council.

At the beginning of the year the council selected as lecturers Dr Lawson, formerly Whately Professor of Political Economy in the University of Dublin; and Professor Moffett, of Queen's College Galway; and the council feel it right to record their great satisfaction at the manner in which these gentlemen have discharged their

duties—Dr. Lawson in delivering courses of lectures, under the management of the literary society, at Tuam, and the Committee for promoting Exhibitions of Manufactures, at Enniskillen; and Professor Moffett in delivering courses of lectures, under the management of the Mechanics' Institute, at Ardee, the Natural History Society at Armagh, and the Mechanics' Institute in Dublin. The communications which the council have received with respect to these courses of lectures indicate how completely the lectures have fulfilled the intention of the founder.

Mr Barrington directed that the lectures should be given in the various towns and villages in Ireland, and should be on political economy in its most extended and useful sense, but particularly as relates to the conduct and duty of people to one another.

At Tuam, we learn that the numbers attending the lectures were very large, considering the size of the town; that 100 attended the first lecture, and at each succeeding lecture the numbers attending increased, so that 1,100 and upwards enjoyed the benefit of the lectures; and the committee describe the lectures of Dr. Lawson as calculated to advance the knowledge of economic science, and win attention to its principles.

The directors of the Dublin Mechanics' Institute state that the attendance was 400 at each lecture, and they add, "That lectures on political economy had been heretofore viewed by the class who frequent the Mechanics' Institute as adverse to the interests of the working man; but that Professor Moffett, in his recent course, had invested the subject with a charm that would, on a future occasion, insure it a more favourable, perhaps they might say a more just reception and hearing, than it had hitherto been wont to meet with."

The next subject which occupied the attention of the council was the election of corresponding members. The council have elected fourteen in all, being chiefly Professors of political economy in the English, Scotch, and Continental universities, or Irishmen who had gone to reside in distant parts of the world.

The council have to acknowledge their obligations to his Excellency the American minister, for the courtesy with which he obtained for the society the Reports of the Commissioners on Patents in the United States

From Mr. Kennedy, the Director of Statistics in the United States, the council received a communication suggesting the importance of having the statistical researches of different governments conducted on a uniform plan. The council replied that they fully appreciated the value of Mr. Kennedy's suggestion, and would do everything in their power to promote international uniformity in statistical research.

The council have since learned that a congress of statisticians is to be held at Brussels, in September, 1852, for the purpose of promoting the general adoption of the suggestions they have referred to; and they will take care to have this society adequately represented at the congress.

The importance of extensive statistical investigations has been shown in a painful but striking manner during the past year, by the results of the Irish census. Before it was taken, vague notions existed in the public mind as to the extent to which the country had suffered by the calamities of the past few years. But the Census Commissioners, by their returns, have placed beyond doubt the exact diminution of the population which has taken place.

The result of the census suggests many important subjects for investigation—as to the causes which have induced so many of our countrymen to leave their native shores, whether such causes are still in operation, whether the condition of the mass of the population is improved or deteriorated by the diminution in their numbers which has taken place. To solve such questions, statistical investigations are required, as definite and conclusive as those which raised such questions. Under these circumstances, the council would call attention to a class of investigations suggested at an early period of this society, which seem to them to present the best means of arriving at a knowledge of the actual condition of the labouring classes, which form the great mass of the population. The inquiries which the council would suggest are, into the wages of labour in different parts of the country from year to year, and the different seasons of the same year, and into the local prices of the different articles of primary consumption by the labouring classes. Recently, the Royal Irish Academy have organized a system of observations on the fluctuations of the tides on the leading points around the coast; and the council think that the example thus set in an important branch of physical inquiry might, with great advantage, be followed in the social sciences, by organizing a system of observations into the fluctuation in wages, and in the prices of food and clothing, throughout Ireland.

The council cannot conclude their report without expressing the obligations which the society is under to the members of the Royal Dublin Society, for the uniform courtesy with which the accommodation that the society house is so well calculated to afford to a scientific body has been placed at the disposal of the Statistical Society.