

V.—*Co-operation as a means of Improving the Condition of the Working Classes.* By James Haughton, J.P.

[Read, 22nd January, 1866]

I APPREHEND it will be admitted by all our members that few other subjects than the one which I have chosen are more important in their nature, or more in accordance with the purposes for which our Association was founded. An improvement in the condition of our working classes claims a prominent place in our discussions ; and is a subject calculated, whenever it is brought under our notice, to call forth our warmest sympathies on behalf of a large number of our fellow men, from whose labor those who are in the possession of the comforts of life derive most of their means of enjoyment ; while the producers of these comforts are themselves, in too many cases, subjected to great privations, from which, under the existing relations of society, they are, by their own unaided efforts, unable to free themselves. Many of these privations are no doubt caused by their own improvidence and intemperance. Perhaps such evils have always had to be borne by large numbers, in all countries, who depend for their subsistence on their daily labor ; but they are not, on that account, the more endurable ; nor is it, therefore, less the duty of the intelligent portions of the community, to strive by all legitimate means to establish a better and a happier state of social existence. Whether or not the co-operative system, which, not many years since, took hold on the minds of some of the more intelligent of the working men in the United Kingdom, and which has more recently engaged the attention, and gained the active support, of some capitalists in England, be a wise means for effecting this worthy and desirable object, is now upon trial ; and it is the subject to which I am desirous of drawing the attention of the members of this Society.

I believe the Dublin Statistical Society occupies a position of influence even in our Legislature, and that our responsibility to society is in proportion to the importance attached to our proceedings. If our members give their minds to an intelligent consideration of this great social question we are now about to discuss, we may, by directing public attention to those economic laws which govern commercial proceedings, prevent failures which an ignorance of those laws might cause to result from those misdirected efforts ; and thus insure a continuance of their success on sounder principles, where mistakes may have been made. I say a *continuance* of success ; for it is a fact which cannot be doubted by any well informed person, that very many, indeed most of the co-operative societies which have been founded in Great Britain and Ireland, (particularly in England) since the Rochdale,—or pioneer association, as it is called,—began its work, now twenty-two years ago, have been financially and morally successful, beyond all the reasonable expectations formed of them at the time they commenced their operations : successful not alone in their pecuniary results, but also in their moral results, by diffusing among those engaged in conducting them a manly feeling of self reliance, and a spirit of brotherhood and mutual

good will and forbearance, which have enabled them to surmount many of the difficulties that stood in the way of success, arising out of those jealousies and distrusts which prevent even educated men, and perhaps ignorant men, in even a higher degree, from having that confidence in one another's integrity and ability in the management of intricate affairs, which require some amount of previous knowledge to bring them to a successful issue. Ignorance was, and is no doubt, a cause of discouragement at the foundation of every society; but the commencement of them all was on a small scale, and the results have shewn that the necessary knowledge was acquired by the managers, and even by many not actively engaged in the details, more readily than was apprehended. The Store, as Mr. Pitman the editor of *The Co-operator*, has well said to me, is the people's school, and it has proved to be a very good school indeed, for an amount of intelligence and ability for management of very many of the co-operative stores has been developed, which none could have anticipated at their formation. You have all heard of the Rochdale Co-operative Society; but the wonderful results which have followed the intelligent and able management of its conductors are not so generally known; and will, I doubt not, excite your surprise. Twenty-two years ago, twenty-eight working men, subscribing one pound each, tried, as the present managers of their great establishments now inform us,—“tried to better their condition in life by becoming their own shopkeepers.” This acorn has already grown into a mighty oak tree, whose branches now spread over the whole land; many of which are annually producing rich fruits in abundance, the sweet fruits of domestic happiness in thousands of families; of a wider spread of education; of a deeper spirit of manliness and self reliance; of a stronger feeling of human brotherhood; of a more extended charity and good will, and of a more enduring knowledge that capital and labor must work in harmony together, in order to produce the best results for our race. These are some of the happy results of the formation of the Rochdale Co-operative Society, whose business operations have spread into the surprising magnitude which the following figures, taken from their Almanack of the present year, indicate.—

“We are glad to report another prosperous year in members and capital, as well as business done. We may with truth say that we have tided over one of the most severe panics ever known, this being the most prosperous year of this society. In December, 1865, the cash received for goods was £196,234; in 1866, the cash received for goods is £249,122; shewing an increase in business of £52,888, or over one thousand pounds per week. The capital of this society in 1865 was £78,778; in 1866 it is £99,989, being an increase in capital over the previous year of £21,211; the number of members in 1865 was 5,326; and in 1866 it is 6,246; thus shewing an increase of 920. Since 1861, this society has expended on new shops in various parts of the town and neighbourhood, nearly £7,000 to accommodate its members; this society has in connection with the various Branches, eleven News-rooms, which are supported from the Educational Fund. We

“ have been obliged during the past year to extend our borders by building a new Branch at Shawclough, at a cost of £900, which has a prospect of doing a large business in the above neighbourhood.”

Another table shows the steady progress of the society from its commencement :—

OPERATIONS OF THE ROCHDALE EQUITABLE PIONEER SOCIETY.

Year.	Members	Funds.	Business	Profits
		£	£	£
1844	28	28		
1845	74	181	710	22
1846	80	252	1,146	80
1847	110	286	1,924	72
1848	140	397	2,276	117
1849	390	1,193	6,611	561
1850	600	2,299	13,179	880
1851	630	2,785	17,638	990
1852	680	3,471	16,352	1,206
1853	720	5,848	22,760	1,674
1854	900	7,172	33,364	1,763
1855	1,400	11,032	44,902	3,106
1856	1,600	12,920	63,197	3,921
1857	1,850	15,142	79,788	5,470
1858	1,950	18,160	71,680	6,284
1859	2,793	27,060	104,012	10,739
1860	3,450	37,710	152,063	15,906
1861	3,900	42,925	176,206	18,020
1862	3,501	38,465	141,074	17,564
1863	4,013	49,361	158,632	19,671
1864	4,747	62,105	174,937	22,717
1865	5,326	78,778	196,234	25,156
1866	6,246	99,989	249,122	31,931

The society is now erecting a building, of which a local journal speaks in the following terms :—

“ NEW CENTRAL CO-OPERATIVE STORES.—This large and imposing erection is built at the junction of St. Mary’s Gate and Toad-lane, and is estimated to cost some £10,000, and to be ready for opening about July, 1867. Next to the Town Hall, it will certainly form the finest and most architecturally beautiful building in the town, and will be an object of attraction as an excellent specimen of street architecture.—*Rochdale Observer*, 29th Dec., 1866.”

These figures do indeed strikingly exhibit the happy results of well conducted co-operative measures ; and they prove that co-operation is a means of improving the condition of the working classes, and, as I shall presently shew, of encreasing the gains and the happiness, too, of the capitalist.

Many others of the societies that have followed in the footsteps of the Pioneer Association have likewise had a wonderful success, and are spreading abroad an amount of comfort and industrial knowledge hitherto unknown among our working classes. Some, I may indeed say all, of them have had serious difficulties at the commence-

ment to encounter, arising from indifference, from ignorance, from the difficulty of finding suitable agents, from distrust, from jealousy; but these impediments have been surmounted where a wise and prudent management prevailed. Sometimes unreasonable expectations of speedy good results have been entertained; and some of the societies which started failed of success; partly because of ignorance in the management of such affairs; partly because of impatience; and sometimes, no doubt, from the dishonesty of agents; but this cause, I am happy to say I have been informed, is a charge that seldom has been made. The quarterly settlement of accounts, and taking of stock, prevent much mischief from arising from that source.

The Rochdale society being the first founded, and the most successful, simply from that cause, naturally engages most public attention; but many other societies are rising rapidly into great importance. All the well conducted societies have increased in number of members and in capital, from year to year. In Manchester and other places very beautiful stores have been built; Oldham affords a striking example. I annex some figures from its last report.—

OLDHAM	1864-5	1865-6	Incr case.	Rate per cent of Increase
	£	£	£	
Cash Received for Goods Sold	60,552	80,727	20,175	33
Paid in Dividends and Interest	6,151	9,448	3,297	53
Share Capital	20,646	28,056	7,410	48
Penny Bank Investments	341	646	305	89
Fixed Stock	7,254	7,305	51	..
Reduction of Fixed Stock	472	883	411	87
No. of Members	1,878	2,116	238	12½

The Chairman stated that 2½ per. cent. of the nett profits are devoted to educational purposes. £555 had been given for that object. This is noble conduct on the part of working men—a fine result of co-operation.

I cannot now go into many details, neither is it my wish to do so at present; my desire being to excite among our members, and among the public at large, a spirit of enquiry into the workings of these associations, so that we may be able, as opportunities arise, to act favorably on public opinion and on the Legislature where it may be necessary, on their behalf. To such of you as desire to obtain full information as to the progress of these novel institutions, I recommend *The Co-operator*, a fortnightly journal, edited by Henry Pitman, 41, John Dalton-street, Manchester (It may be had through Murray and Co. 16, Fleet-street), price 1d. From its pages an amount of information on this most important movement, which has hitherto made but little noise, but which is silently working a wondrous revolution in these lands, will be gained, such as must surprise and interest many of you.

These societies now number over 500 (I believe, several hundreds), and the immense magnitude of their business has given rise to a

Wholesale Co-operative Society in Manchester, whose transactions are also already on a very large, and yearly increasing scale as it supplies the retail establishments with most of the articles they require. And it affords evidence that earnest and honest men, who have not been educated in business habits, very soon acquire a sufficient amount of knowledge to ensure success; as the following figures will clearly evince:—

“THE NORTH OF ENGLAND CO-OPERATIVE WHOLESALE SOCIETY, 53, Dantzic-street, Manchester, is a federation of retail Co-operative societies, and was established with the object, firstly, of bringing the producer and consumer into more immediate contact, and thus enhance the profits of co-operation by diminishing the cost of distribution; and secondly, to protect societies in the days of their infancy and inexperience, and enable them to purchase their commodities as advantageously as the largest societies.”

Upwards of 200 societies do their business through the wholesale.

Year.	No of shares taken up.	Capital.	Sales.	Net Profits
		£	£	£
1864	18,337	2,456	51,858	306
1865	24,005	7,182	120,755	1,850
1866	31,030	10,936	175,490	2,347

Before I pass away from this branch of my subject, I must ask your attention for a few minutes to the present aspect of co-operative stores in Ireland.

Co-operative stores have not yet taken any deep root in Ireland; but I have been informed that the few that are in existence are thriving concerns. The Temperance Co-operative store in Denmark Street, in our city, is steadily increasing its business; and its managers have no doubt of ultimate success. They are speaking of enlarging their concerns; and such I have learned is the present sound condition of the Bakers' Co-operative Store in High-street. The store at Inchicore has been very prosperous. The very intelligent Secretary of that Society, which has now been in existence nearly seven years, has furnished me with some statistics of progress which I am happy in bringing under your notice.

“The following will show the progress we have made:—

Sales 1st year, ending March, 1861	...	£3,514	13	11½
” 2nd ” ” 1862	...	5,893	11	8½
” 3rd ” ” 1863	...	6,212	10	1½
” 4th ” ” 1864	...	7,926	3	9½
” 5th ” ” 1865	...	8,564	19	4
” 6th ” ” 1866	...	9,826	17	10½
		£41,938	16	9½
Sales nine months ending December, 1866		7,535	10	8
Total sales since commencement	£49,474	7	5½

Total withdrawals by members	4,263	19	7
Amount of assets, December, 1866	1,357	19	9½
			<hr/>		
Total deposited on shares	£5,621	19	4½
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Net profit on the above sales	£4,121	5	3½
Expenses paid	1,350	4	6½
Allowed for depreciation of building, &c	112	19	9½
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Total gross profit	£5,584	9	7½

“ We had about 30 members with a like number of pounds to start with, therefore we had to use great economy ; we paid two shillings a week rent for the store, which was a small cottage

“ The average sales the first quarter was £38 per week ; last quarter they averaged £200.

“ We have now a very fine store of our own, with a long lease of the ground ; four persons are employed in the store, and are constantly kept busy.”

This society commenced with a capital of £30, it now has assets of over £1,357. Such success as this, and which has been principally gained from the men employed at the works of the Great Southern and Western Railway Company at their Inchicore works, is surely good evidence of the advantages accruing to our working people from co-operation. These men have an excellent reading room at the works, provided for them by the Board of Railway Directors. The number of co-operative members averages about 160. The following articles are sold in their store :—Groceries, Provisions, Butcher’s Meat, Drapery and Clothing, Boots and Shoes, Coals, Ironmongery, Brushes, Baskets, Earthenware.

There are two flourishing co-operative stores at Bessbrook, near Newry, confined to the employees in Mr. Richardson’s noble factory, which gives employment to some two thousand persons. The first was started in 1853, with a capital of £400 raised by 10s. shares, which has increased to £840, after paying dividends on capital of from 30 to 40 per cent. and laying by a reserve fund of £553, to meet chances of loss, as this society gives credit to purchasers. The second society was founded 1st August, 1865, with a capital of £155 in shares of 5s. This is a most interesting society, being confined to juvenile members connected with the Band of Hope. I believe all the members of both societies are teetotalers, for Mr. Richardson does not allow a public house to be opened in the town, of which he is, I apprehend, the sole proprietor ; and happiness and comfort, such as are little known where these pest-houses are permitted to shed abroad their demoralizing influences, diffuse their blessings over this favored town of some 3,000 or 4,000 inhabitants. The juvenile society is also in a flourishing condition, having added in a short time £50 to its capital, after paying 20 per cent. per annum to its shareholders, and placed £23 to a reserve fund.

I regret I cannot give a more detailed account of these interesting

societies, from the statistics which have been furnished me by their managers. My time will not permit of my enlarging; but I have said enough to show you the happy results following from those well directed efforts. Drunkenness is almost unknown, crime is almost unknown and destitution is wholly unknown in this happy community. The absence of strong drink everywhere else would produce the same blessed results. Co-operation will not thoroughly fulfil its glorious mission until alcoholic liquors shall be by common consent banished from the land. To effect this object is the truest benevolence, and the surest means of improving the condition of the working classes.

I must now pass from this part of my subject, and direct your attention to a new phase of the Co-operative movement, which has arisen in England, and is yet but in its infancy, but which seems likely ere long to arrive at a healthy maturity. I refer to the union of capital with labor named "Partnerships of Industry;" which, I believe, had its origin in Messrs. Crossley's establishment in Halifax a few years ago, but which did not extend beyond it, until within the last two years, during which time a few other large employers of labor have warmly adopted the principle of the union of capital with labor, and are now bearing testimony to its good results, so that the system is likely rapidly to progress. This new co-operative idea gives to those who work for weekly wages a per-centage of the profits also; and so far as the experiment has been tried it has worked well, and proved highly advantageous and satisfactory to all parties.

I now proceed to give you a few of the evidences before me of its successful results. These I gather from *The Co-operator*, the journal already referred to—a most valuable repertory of facts relating to the progress of co-operation in all its present interesting aspects.

I have not any particulars relative to Messrs. Crossley's works in Halifax, neither am I aware of the exact nature of their arrangement with their work-people; but I believe it gives them a per centage of the profits;* and a friend informed me a few days ago that he saw in one of our papers a statement that their last year's profits amounted to 20 per cent.

Messrs. Greening and Co. of Manchester have adopted the practice of dividing the profits of their business with their work-people. Under their auspices, a conference on the subject of "Partnerships of Industry" was held on the 19th of last May, which afforded intense pleasure to those who took part in it. A large number of their work-people attended. Thomas Hughes, Esq. M.P. presided. He throws himself heartily into the movement. The meeting was held in the Trevelyan Temperance Hotel, and the Chairman expressed his pleasure at that circumstance, as co-operation and temperance were kindred questions. He referred also to the antagonism between capital and labor, which never looked so serious as during the last two or three years; but he thought a brighter day was now approaching. Through the amendment of the Partnership Act, mas-

* I am informed that Messrs Crossley share their profits only with those of their workmen who are shareholders in their concern.

ters were now able to give their workers a share in their profits without admitting them to a share in the management of their business. At a meeting of masters and men in Messrs. Greenings' establishment, held that morning, both masters and men agreed that a bonus out of profits should be given even to the men who were not shareholders, so that all employed in the establishment should participate in the advantages of their united labors. This evinced a good feeling on the part of those men who had invested some of their small savings in the concern. Mr. Greening stated that it was to Messrs Briggs that the palm was due, of shewing that this system of sharing profits could be satisfactorily arranged. Messrs. Greening are engaged in the iron trade; they are manufacturers of a great variety of articles, gates, fences, wire work, etc, and they seem to have no doubt as to the successful results of the new principle they have adopted with their work-people. Messrs. Briggs, another house which has adopted this new principle, are owners of Whitwood and Methley collieries; and Mr. Archibald Briggs, one of the partners who was present at the conference, will speak for their firm.

“ The history of the experiment was another instance of good
“ coming out of evil; for his brother was so disgusted with the coal
“ trade, from the difficulties caused by strikes and other misunder-
“ standings—the result of which was that for two years the mines
“ were worked at an average return of only $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.—that he
“ determined to sell the collieries. This resolve was afterwards
“ modified into an attempt to form a partnership with the men, so
“ as to induce them to work more steadily, and strive to promote
“ their master's good; in fact, to remove the feeling they had always
“ shown so strongly—that their masters were their natural enemies,
“ and that every penny of loss they could bring upon their masters
“ was a penny gained to themselves. The effect of the new mode of
“ working was, to show that every penny gained by the masters
“ would be a halfpenny gained by the men for themselves, inasmuch
“ as all the profit made above 10 per cent. would be divided equally
“ with the workpeople. The men were gradually becoming friendly
“ to the plan, and some of those who were bitter enemies in times
“ of disagreement were now fighting hardest for this just and peace-
“ ful principle; while others who had been notorious for their drunk-
“ enness and carelessness were transformed by the influence of the
“ share-clubs into steady and saving men. There were five of these
“ share-clubs into which the men paid a small sum weekly, which
“ would in time make them the owners of entire shares. In this
“ way the co-operative plan was improving the whole tone and
“ character of the workpeople. Some of the men who formerly spent
“ their spare cash—and much that they could not spare—in drink,
“ were now moving for a Freehold Land Society, so that they might
“ own a bit of land and a house of their own, which was a laudable
“ ambition with many colliers. Again (continued Mr. Briggs) we
“ have a committee of working colliers, who meet once-a-month, or
“ oftener, for the purpose of stating any cause of complaint, or
“ making any suggestions as to an improved way of working, or a

“ little alteration in the management, or as to the times of stopping for meals, so as to produce economy and convenience in the working of the pits. In this way changes have arisen with the men themselves, which, though simple, have led to much greater economy in the working. It is evident that as these men are down in the mine every day, and have more experience than any one else of the details of practical coal-getting, they can often suggest improvements that would not perhaps occur to employers and overlookers, and which the men would probably never take the trouble to suggest, had they not a personal interest in the concern.”

From the Chairman's address I select the following pleasing statement—he is a shareholder with Greening and Co.—“ I do think that the experience of our own company, and the experience of Messrs. Briggs and Co., proves that the men are beginning to appreciate the new position in which they are placed: that they are doing their work better and more honestly; that they are taking more care of the materials entrusted to them; and that they are beginning to see the real meaning which underlies this great experiment of partnerships of industry.”

Mr. Greening related the following anecdote in illustration of their views and practice:—“ There is an anecdote—very popular in our own particular trade in Manchester—illustrating this position of ours. It is said that a smith went into a large workshop in this city, and asked for work from the master. When asked what wages he expected, he produced his hammer, which had a long handle, and three notches on it; and taking hold of the hammer with the shortest leverage, he said—‘ That, sir, is 28s. a-week;’ holding the hammer with a longer leverage, he said—‘ That, sir, is 30s. a-week;’ and then, taking hold of the hammer's handle at the end, so as to wield the heaviest blows, he said—‘ That, sir, is 32s. a-week!’ Now, we are proposing to have hammers with the longest handles, and wielded in the most effective manner, so as to produce the most powerful blows in our favour that we can possibly obtain, but instead of giving the man 32s. a-week only, and relying upon his word that he will earn it, we say to him—‘ If you will strike those telling blows, and show us the expected result, you will receive, beyond your wage remuneration, a share of the profits.’ That I call a practical measure; there is nothing Utopian about it.”

On the 6th October last, an excursion from the “ Social Science Congress” left Manchester to celebrate the opening of the “ Cobden Memorial Mills,” at Sabden, which are to be conducted on the principles adopted by Messrs. Greening & Co and Messrs. Briggs & Co. Mr. Hughes, M.P. presided on this occasion also, when he delivered a most interesting address, from which I give a few extracts; “ It is only as late as July of last year that the last Act was passed that entirely freed co-operative effort in this country. There was, in 1865, a short Partnership Act passed, which made it legal for employers to give a portion of their profits to their workpeople without making them thereby partners, or giving them a right to interfere in the management of the business. It is now competent

" for any employer to do that, without risking the success of his concern. The question now is, whether these partnerships of industry will succeed in this country. * * *

" Those who did not believe in co-operation have hitherto been able to say—"It is all very well in theory, but when it comes to practice, you may depend upon it you will break down; and you could never get capitalists to embark their capital under such circumstances." Until a few weeks ago, I should have had no reply to make to any person who argued in that way. But, my friends, within this last week I have had the pleasure of visiting one of a group of coal mines in the West Riding of Yorkshire, belonging to a Partnership of Industry—that of Henry Briggs and Co., Limited. Four years ago there were great strikes in the coal trade of the West Riding, and the leader of the employers, the man who fought the battle of his own order most manfully, was Henry Briggs. The men used to say, until it became a sort of proverb, that the coal-owners were devils, and that Briggs was the prince of the devils. Mr. Briggs fought that battle as well as he could; but when he came to look at his books, he found that his large capital of £80,000 was bringing him in a contemptible return of 4 per cent. So Mr. Briggs said to his sons and partners—"This won't do; we had much better sell our colliery, put our money into a more profitable business, and have done with these miserable disputes. One of his sons suggested that they should have one more trial—give their men a share in the profits, and see how the collieries worked under that system." Mr. Briggs said—"Try it if you like; things cannot be worse." The result was that in July, 1865, the collieries of Henry Briggs and Co. were converted into the first Partnership of Industry. We have just been holding the anniversary meeting in Leeds, to celebrate the foundation and successful working of that concern. What has been the result of that experiment? The result has been this—that whereas only three years ago the interest on the capital invested in those collieries was only 4 per cent., in this year 17 per cent. and upwards has been made. Those who held shares—and it was arranged that workmen could take shares—received 10 per cent. as interest; and after that the extra profits were shared on capital, and as a bonus to labour, every workman being entitled to 5 per cent. on his earnings who had taken the trouble to get a penny book for the entry of his wages. The shareholders—some of them being workmen—got 12 per cent. in all, or three times as much as under the old system; while £1,800 was divided as the bonus upon labour, being distributed in proportion to the wages. And whereas, before the introduction of this system, there had been nothing but disputes between the firm and the men, since the adoption of the Co-operative Partnership there has not been a single quarrel; but the men have been thoroughly contented, having received the ordinary rate of wages, including an advance, and have made useful suggestions, and have done their work in a way that has resulted in these large profits which would have been impossible

“ under the old system. What has been done in one place may be done in another—and what has been done in one trade may be done in another.”

Time obliges me to omit many telling extracts from addresses made by other speakers. I am endeavouring to give you much information within the limits of half an hour, a task that I am unable to accomplish. To supply my deficiencies I must again refer you to the columns of *The Co-operator*, some copies of which I have laid on the table, or distributed to members present.

One extract from Mr. Briggs’s speech I must not omit; he said:—
“ There was nothing, however, succeeded like success, and he thought a bonus of £5 or £10, which many before him, had felt in their pockets, was a proof of their success; and he would state as a further proof of that success, that the dividend which he as a partner had received during the last year, notwithstanding that they had paid £1,800 as bonus to workmen, had been larger than he had ever received from the collieries before, even in the most prosperous years.”

Professor Fawcett, M.P. and others made able speeches, which you will find in No. 100 of *The Co-operator*; and I also refer to No. 102 and 103; for I must hurry on to a conclusion.

By a Parliamentary return to June, 1865, I find that 505 Industrial and Provident Societies in England and Wales had:—

	£
Share Capital on 31st December, 1864	685,072
Loan ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ” ”	89,423
Cash paid for goods bought for year ending 1864	2,578,933
Cash received for goods sold	2,742,957
Profit on same	225,569
Value of assets and property of societies on 31st December, 1864	891,775

These different items would, no doubt, show a large increase in each on the two last year’s business; but of these I have not seen the returns. Such immense transactions as these figures represent are well deserving the best consideration we can give to the operations of the societies engaged in them; and which are silently working great changes in the condition of large numbers of our fellow-men who live by their daily labor—changes which are improving them, elevating them, and fitting them to take a higher position, both morally and socially, in their country.

I have now, ladies and gentlemen, brought in review the three stages of this great social revolution now in operation—the Retail Co-operative stores; the Wholesale Co-operative establishments; and the union of capital and labor denominated “Partnerships of Industry.” I hope the merits of each and all of them will be closely examined and criticized by you; so that if there be a good principle in them, a sound principle, calculated to improve the relations between employers and employed—which relations are not at present in a healthy state, conducive to harmony and good-

will—that they may be fostered, and their extension encouraged; so that the condition of our working-classes shall be improved thereby; and if, on the contrary, there be any principle of evil in them,—any undeveloped cancer, calculated to mar the present pleasant prospects of their warm supporters, so that their tendency be for evil and not for good,—let their further extension be discouraged, and the mischief arrested before it becomes too great for human control. There are some, I am aware, who have these apprehensions. For my own part, I see only increasing happiness from the universal adoption of these co-operative principles; and I rejoice to know that some of our best and ablest men and deepest thinkers agree with me in this respect. But let the whole matter be well canvassed and fearlessly criticized, so that the wisest judgment may be brought to bear upon it.

Co-operation is no new principle of action among men. It is only co-operation in the modes alluded to in this paper that causes any adverse criticism, such is the ordeal through which all things new must pass. Co-operation of states for mutual protection; co-operation of lawyers, of physicians, and of other professional men for protection of their interests has long existed. Why should not commercial men and their employees also co-operate *together* for good? They have long co-operated *separately* to gain their private ends, as if capital and labor were never to meet in harmony. Thus they have long injured one another; and, in so doing, disturbed the peace of the whole community. If strikes and lock-outs be put an end to by the harmonious action of “Partnerships of Industry,” and that thus the bonds of brotherhood among men shall be strengthened, the blessings thereby conferred on our country will be incalculable.

I have one other phase of this great popular movement to bring under your notice; and I hope some of you will live to see it commenced, and to help in its completion.

In the year 1849 the late Mr. J. S. Buckingham, a man who had many noble ideas greatly in advance of his time, and whose friendship I had the happiness to enjoy, published a volume of 512 pages entitled, “National Evils and Practical Remedies.”

His introductory chapter is entitled, “Evils of Communism, and Benefits of Association.” The work is comprised in six parts, under which he classes almost all our various evils; these parts are divided into several chapters each, in which he brings forward many existing evils, and proposes his remedies for them, which he defends with much acuteness and great ability. The only part of his work with which we are now concerned is that in which he discusses the evils of competition, and the benefits of its opposite—union and co-operation.

Speaking of the benefits conferred by the limitation of the hours of labor, he remarks:—“A more just distribution of the profits of labor is, however, of still greater importance, and is quite as attainable as the former, if Governments and Communities would determine on its adoption. For this purpose it might be well, first, to enact a law by which all joint-stock or associated bodies under-

“ taking large works, such as factories, mines, railroads, docks, and
“ other works employing large numbers of persons, should be limited
“ to the division of 10 per cent. profit ; and at the end of each year
“ all surplus made above that amount to be divided *pro rata* among
“ the persons employed, as a per centage on their ordinary wages, by
“ which means all would have an interest in the general prosperity ;
“ and more contentment, as well as a higher reward, be enjoyed by
“ all.” I do not concur with Mr. Buckingham in his recommendation
to oblige capitalists by Act of Parliament to divide their profits
with their work-people ; but I feel assured that their doing so
voluntarily would greatly increase the happiness, and probably the
fortunes also, of both parties.

Eighteen years ago, this wise statesman, for such he was—for
his mind was filled with noble ideas, which in his day were deemed
utopian and impracticable, but many of them have been since
adopted—conceived the idea of “ Partnerships of Industry,” which
are now being carried into operation *voluntarily* by some of the
largest employers in England ; and which principle seems destined
to be ere long a ruling one among the manufacturing and other
trades throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Buckingham’s grand idea,—on the realization of which he
believed the greater proportion of all our crime, and the entire sum
of all our destitution, would be done away with,—was a model town,
in which the rich and the poor should dwell together in a style of
comfort never hitherto enjoyed by any community. This model
town was to contain ten thousand inhabitants, every one of whom
should, by his own industry, by the fruits of previously acquired
capital, be placed in the enjoyment of all the comforts, and more
of all the real pleasures of life than are now afforded under the pre-
sent wretched system of social existence, or rather social misery
to the majority, in all our ill-constructed, badly ventilated, and
dirty cities and towns.

The cost of building this model town would be about three mil-
lions of pounds, and one million more would be required to stock
the large farm around it, and the manufactories, workshops, etc.
for its 10,000 inhabitants.

The mode of raising this capital, the plan of the town, and its
probable, or, as he believed, certain success—success both in a
pecuniary and moral point of view—are detailed at length, and
supported by such cogent, indeed I may say, such unanswerable,
arguments, as make it highly probable that the idea will some time
or other be carried out ; and it seems to me that the “ Co-operative
Stores” and the “ Partnerships of Industry” now in operation are
but the beginning of this great end,—the nucleus of this fine con-
ception,—when men, actuated by better and kindlier feelings to-
wards each other, will heartily unite in wise measures to banish
much, if not all, the destitution and moral degradation which we
see all around us ; and for the existence of which there is no neces-
sity,—ignorance alone being the cause of them. When this ignorance
shall be dispelled by the light of knowledge, which seems to be now
bursting upon us, in the present efforts to secure a closer union of

the rich and the poor, wiser and nobler attempts will be made to secure for all our fellow-men the comforts of life.* Under the feeling that there is nothing wild or utopian in the plan of improving society suggested by Mr. Buckingham, and believing it quite possible of realization, through the means of the co-operative principle which has already produced happy results almost un hoped for, I have been induced thus shortly to notice the plan proposed by my deceased friend, for realizing a condition of happiness towards the securing of which all our benevolent exertions tend, but for which great purpose they have hitherto proved sadly inefficient. Some nobler efforts must be put forth, if we would accomplish all that we ought to do in the light of that Christianity which we profess to be our guide, but which has hitherto produced but little ripe fruit among mankind.

Ladies and gentlemen, my task (and it has proved a pleasant one) is now completed. I commend the whole subject to your serious consideration, and to the best attention of my fellow citizens. The condition of our working-classes needs amendment.

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

TWENTIETH SESSION.—OPENING MEETING.

[Tuesday, 27th November, 1866.]

The Society met at the Museum of Irish Industry, Stephen's-green, at eight o'clock, Sir Robert Kane, V.P., in the chair.

The Hon. Judge Longfield, President of the Society, and the following Vice-presidents, Edward Barrington, Esq., Professor Ingram, and James Haughton, Esq. were also present.

The minutes of the last meeting were read by Mr. J. Monroe, Hon. Secretary, and confirmed by the Chairman.

Mr. Molloy, Hon. Secretary, read the Report of the Council.

Sir Robert Kane, V.P., delivered the Inaugural Address.

Sir Robert Kane having vacated the chair, and the Hon. Judge Longfield having been called thereto,

Dr. Hancock, Hon. Secretary, then proposed—"That the best thanks of the Society are due, and are hereby given, to Sir Robert Kane for his very able and valuable address."

* Among these will be reckoned the Co-operative system and Teetotalism conjoined. When these fine principles really shake hands together, they will cause wealth to accumulate so rapidly that no good work will be stayed for an hour, for want of funds; for funds far in excess of all human wants will then be continually accumulating, to enlarge the sphere of human happiness. The direct expenditure on intoxicating liquors in Great Britain and Ireland is, I believe, much over one hundred millions of pounds per annum. The indirect loss to the nation, in many ways, amounts to quite as large a sum in addition. Co-operation will yet teach men a wise application of these mighty savings.