
[Read, 18th November, 1879.]

At the commencement of the Thirty-third Session, Council have to submit the following report of the proceedings of the Society during the past year.

Donations from representatives of deceased members.

The Council have received the following valuable donations to the library: a copy of Lithographed Tables of Statistics of Ireland, compiled in 1827 by the celebrated statistician, M. Cesar Moreau, F.R.S., from the widow of the late William Stanley, Esq., and a bequest of books from the executors of the late Sir Thomas Larcom. Both were original members, having joined the Society at its foundation in 1847, and both belonged to the class of official statisticians.

Mr. Stanley, when Chief Clerk in the Stamp Office in Dublin, obtained, in 1831, the prize offered by Valentine, second Lord Cloncurry, of £200 for the best essays on Irish affairs. The work was afterwards published by his lordship, and is a very interesting and original statistical and social science work of great value. It is remarkable as being one of the earliest to point out the importance of raising Ireland to an equality with England, and allaying discontent by the complete extension of the English Poor-law to Ireland—a policy largely adopted by the Irish Poor-law Act of 1838. That Act still left wide differences between the poor-laws of the two countries, to which attention has been from time to time directed in addresses of our presidents, reports prepared under our instructions, and papers of private members—differences, too, very important to consider in the present year of considerable depression. The high character Mr. Stanley acquired by these essays, he fully sustained by some other writings, such as his Facts on Ireland in 1832, his Policy of a Poor-law for Ireland in 1835, and his Financial Exigencies of Ireland before and after the
Report of the Council at the [April, Legislative Union, in 1864. After he had retired from the public service his taste for Irish statistics still continued, and more than forty years after the Cloncurry Prizes, in 1872, he published the two series of tracts on Irish agricultural interests, and in Mr. Thom’s Statistics of Ireland for 1879, a valuable table of Proprietors of Land in Ireland in 1870 appears recorded as compiled by Mr. Stanley. From his retiring disposition he took little active part in our proceedings; but his great statistical attainments and the faithful use of his talents deserve to be recorded. Amongst his intimate friends he was appreciated as highly gifted, chivalrously honourable, and devotedly true in every relation in life.

Sir Thomas Larcom by his will bequeathed 543 volumes to the Society. He was one of the first two Vice-Presidents of the Society at its foundation, and in that capacity delivered an address in 1850. After he became Under-Secretary, his duties were too onerous to allow of his accepting the office of President, and he continued a Vice-President till his death. His official career in Ireland commenced with service as engineer officer on the Ordnance Survey, and he was in charge of the Ordnance Survey Office in the Phoenix-park from 1828 till 1846. He was first Commissioner and then Deputy-Chairman of the Board of Public Works, from 1846 till 1853, and then Under-Secretary for Ireland from 1853 till 1868, when he retired from the public service. His extraordinary statistical talents were displayed on the Irish Census of 1841, in the organization of the Irish Agricultural Statistics in 1847, and in the Irish Census of 1851. He was the author of an interesting memoir on the Down Survey, published by one of our antiquarian societies. The distinctions conferred on him by the Crown, of Companion of the Bath; Knight Commander of the Bath, and a Baronetcy, attest the appreciation of his official services. As a skilful, conscientious, and able organizer of statistical departments, and great statistical works like the Irish Census of 1841 and 1851, he was unsurpassed in the public service of Ireland in the present century. The deep interest he took in the affairs of our Society he evinced by taking the chair from time to time at its meetings, and on his death, after ten years retirement from Ireland, we find the Society remembered in his will by a munificent donation of books.

Representation at meetings of other societies.

The Society was represented at the Statistical Section of the British Association at Sheffield by the attendance of three members of the council—Dr. Hancock, Mr. Constantine Molloy, and Mr. Samuel Haughton. Mr. Molloy was selected as one of the Secretaries of the section. The Society was represented at the Social Science Congress at Manchester by Mr. Samuel Haughton.

The Social Science Congress is to meet in 1880 at Edinburgh; it met in Dublin in 1861, and the period is rapidly approaching when in the rotation of its meetings it should be invited to meet a second time in Dublin. The Council, however, feel that it would be premature to propose to their fellow citizens an invitation until the country has recovered from the depression of the present and past years.
Legislation on matters in which the Society has taken an interest.

The Council have to congratulate the Attorney-General for Ireland on having brought the revision of Ante-Union Statute Law of Ireland to a completion. They feel confident that the earnestness he has shown in this work will be followed by a prompt issue of an edition of Revised Ante-Union Irish Statutes, on the model of the English Revised Statutes, so that the public, the officials, and legal professions may get the benefit of that which has been so efficiently executed.

The completion of the Ante-Union Statute Law Revision raises another question. Owing to the labours of the Irish Record Commissioners, from 1811 to 1829, there exist in the custody of the Master of Rolls in Ireland copies of ancient statutes of Ireland which have not, like the corresponding English statutes, been published for purposes of historical research. The Council think this a matter deserving of consideration at the selection of Irish records for publication under Public Record (Ireland) Act, 1867, s. 21.

Progress in matters in which the Society has taken an interest.

The subjects of transfer of land and improved registration of deeds, which have been frequently brought forward at the meetings of the Society, were during the past year the subjects of reports by a Select Committee of the House of Commons and of Commissioners in Ireland. The ground is thus cleared for immediate and useful legislation. Upon the subject of Poor Removals very important recommendations have been made by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which, if adopted, will have the effect of terminating the evil so far as removals from England are concerned; but, owing to the retrograde state of the Scotch Poor-law, and the anomalous difference between it and the English law, no recommendations of similar adequacy have been made for checking removals from Scotland; while seeing that the proportion of persons of Irish birth in Scotland to the total population of Scotland is twice as great as the proportion in England and Wales, and the difficulty of acquiring a settlement is at the same time much greater, the risk of removals from Scotland is, in proportion to the Irish population there, much greater than in England and Wales.

Barrington Lectures in Political Economy.

The Council have had three classes in successful operation in Dublin during the past year, under the auspices of the Church of Ireland Young Men's Christian Association; the Irish Mercantile Clerk's Association, and the Presbyterian Association. They have also had provincial classes in the Model School, City of Limerick, and one in an Endowed School in the County of Down.

Papers read during the past session.

The papers read on Economic Science were: by Mr. Samuel Haughton on the "Causes of the Slow Progress of Political Economy"; by one of the Barrington Lecturers, Mr. Moylan, on the
"Impolicy of a revival of Protection as a remedy for present Depres-
sion;" by another of the Barrington Lecturers, Mr. McCarthy, on
"Reciprocity;" and by Mr. S. P. Preston on "Some Economic
Objections to the Custom of Fortuning Daughters that prevails
amongst the Farming classes in Munster."

On Statistics there were two papers by Mr. Murrough O'Brien,
"On the Valuation of Real Property for Taxation." On Law Reform,
Mr. Henry Jephson read a paper on "Irish Statute Law Reform,
"in continuation of one he had read at the British Association, at its
meeting in Dublin. Mr. Jephson's proposal of a comparison of the
differences between the statute law of England and Ireland is a
natural complement to the now completed work of Irish Statute
Law revision, and to the proposed inclusion of Ireland in the crimi-
nal code, after it had been at first omitted.

Mr. George H. Smith's "Observations on the Intestate Widows' Acts" touches on a point where Irish law is very far behind the
corresponding legislation in Scotland, and contains a number of
valuable suggestions by which the benefits proposed to be conferred
of cheap administration of the law may be really secured for a very
poor and helpless class.

Mr. James McDonnell read a paper giving a description of leases
based on the principles of parliamentary tenant-right, and making
valuable suggestions as to the means of carrying his views into effect.

Mr. Dodd read a paper on the "Law relating to realization of
Judgments and Decrees, with special reference to Judgments and
Decrees against Tenant Farmers." He recommended that county
court decrees above and below £20 should be put on an equality,
and be enforceable against land as well as goods, without expense of
resorting to the superior court, that the office of sub-sheriff should
be reformed, and that every county court should have bankrupt juris-
diction as in England, and that there should be a local registry of
tenancies from year to year, small leaseholds, mortgages, and other
charges upon them. Such a reform is the true way to reduce the
excessive interest charged on small loans to the rate of 4½ per cent.
usual on large loans.

One of the subjects raised by Mr. Dodd's paper, the want of local
bankruptcy jurisdiction in the county courts, on the English and
Scotch model, was made the subject of a report obtained by a fund
subscribed for such inquiries. The result has been a very able
report on the "Differences of the Laws in Ireland from those in
England and Scotland," by one of the Barrington lecturers, Mr.
James H. M. Campbell, on the "Bankruptcy Law of Ireland com-
pared with those of England and Scotland." The report concludes
with a recommendation of conferring bankruptcy jurisdiction on the
county courts, under the official assignee system of 1862, remodelling
the office of registrar of county courts, and reforming the power of the
sub-sheriffs.

In the present year, when the unfavourable season has driven so
many farmers and small traders into bankruptcy, it is a serious
aggravation of the evil to have the trifling assets in all these small
cases loaded with the costs, delay, and expense of central bankruptcy
jurisdiction, owing to the delay now of some years duration of extending to Ireland the English and Scotch law, of having bankruptcy jurisdiction conferred on every county court judge.

Dr. Hancock read a paper "On the Report of the Irish Lunacy Commissioners, and the policy of extending the English Law for the Protection of Neglected Lunatics to Ireland." The feature of the paper was the avoidance of immediate expense of new buildings, by recommending the extension to Ireland of the Belgian, Scotch, and English system of boarding-out harmless lunatics, so as to give immediate protection to the 6,000 lunatics officially reported to be in a neglected state.

II.—Obituary Notice of the late Alexander Thom, Esq. J.P., Queen's Printer in Ireland, a Vice-President of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland. Prepared by request of the Council. By W. Neilson Hancock, LL.D.
[Read, 27th January, 1880.]

Since the last meeting of this Society, we have lost one of its original members, Mr. Alexander Thom, who did more to popularize statistics in Ireland and place before the world the real condition of the country than any other member. The Council have requested me to bring under your notice a brief sketch of his life, with special reference to the services he has rendered to Ireland in the matter of statistics.

Mr. Thom was born in Scotland of a good Scotch family, and was educated at the High School of Edinburgh. His maternal grandfather was an estated gentleman, Mr. John Turner, of Turner Hall, in Aberdeenshire; his paternal grandfather was a linen manufacturer, and the first to introduce into Scotland a machine for spinning linen yarn. His father, Mr. Walter Thom, was a statistical writer of considerable repute, as appears from the notice of him in Cates' Dictionary of General Biography. He wrote an account of his native parish of Bervie, in Aberdeenshire, for Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Survey of Scotland; he contributed several articles to Brewster's Encyclopaedia, and published in 1811 a History of Aberdeen, in which he describes himself as author of Sketches in Political Economy.

When the great Sir Robert Peel came over to Ireland as Chief Secretary, he selected Mr. Walter Thom as editor of the Dublin Journal, which after the fashion of that day he retained to defend his policy. On Sir Robert Peel retiring from the Chief-Secretaryship in 1817, he handed over the Dublin Journal* to Mr. Walter Thom, and he appears as proprietor from thenceforward. The prospects of the paper were seriously affected by the changes of imperial