
[Read 6th July, 1880.]

My object in this paper is to bring before your notice the bequest of books and pamphlets which this Society has recently received under the will of the late Major-General the Right Hon. Sir Thomas Larcom. The collection comprises in all about 550 volumes, dealing with subjects directly concerned with the social and economic condition of Ireland during the present century, and will be found to be a storehouse of the most valuable information for the historian, the economist, and the statesman. There are about twenty-six volumes containing the survey of the different counties in Ireland, a number of valuable geological treatises, and the Parliamentary Reports for the last thirty years of all the commissions appointed to consider such questions as the poor-law, the drainage Acts, and the land laws of Ireland. In the list are also to be found the works of all the best known authors of recent years upon the social and political condition of Ireland, together with a number of volumes in which are bound together pamphlets treating of the same subjects. But the most important portion of the collection, and the one to which I wish more especially to direct your attention, consists of 136 volumes of letters and papers, all uniformly bound, and all put together upon a similar principle. Upon the back of each volume is stamped the particular subject and the particular years of which it treats, while upon the leaves inside, somewhat after the fashion of a scrap-book, are pasted extracts from reviews and newspapers, together with pamphlets, letters, and official reports; while not unfrequently the pages are filled with the handwriting of Sir Thomas Larcom himself. Each volume contains a summary of its contents upon the title page, while at intervals between the leaves are inserted small pieces of paper denoting upon their margin the particular writer whose pamphlet is therein inserted, or the particular portion of the subject treated of at that part of the volume. The compilation of these volumes, the mere manual labour of which must have been considerable, was undertaken and carried out by Sir Thomas Larcom himself; and from it we can realize somewhat of the energy of one who, though busied and hurried in the affairs of state, nevertheless in the short hours of his leisure found time to collect and leave behind him such useful memorials of his industry.

The collection seems to have been commenced by Sir Thomas Larcom about the year 1850; and from that time to his death, in 1879, he allowed no opportunity to escape him of adding to his information upon the different social and political agitations in Ireland; and whether it was a debate in the House of Lords, or a discussion in the Mechanic's Institute, an essay from the Edinburgh Review, or a leading article from the Skibbereen Eagle, all have been alike carefully preserved by him, and inserted in these volumes. Eighteen volumes of this series are devoted exclusively to the condition of Ireland from the years 1856 to 1879; and of these, the last volume contains but one
single entry—a newspaper account of the Lord Mayor’s banquet in 1879, which must have been inserted by Sir Thomas a very short time before his death. The most interesting matter in these volumes is the private correspondence between Sir Thomas Larcom and successive English governments, containing autograph letters from such statesmen as Earl Russell, Viscount Cardwell, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Lowe, and the Earl of Mayo. The statistics of crime, of emigration, and the poor-law system, are also faithfully recorded, as well as all the official returns relating to the commerce of the country; and in fact it may be safely asserted that no matter of any importance relating to the economic or political condition of Ireland, that appeared in any public print during the years 1850 to 1879, escaped the industrious scissors of Sir Thomas Larcom. The volume dealing with the condition of Ireland from 1850 to 1857 contains two valuable papers prepared by Sir Thomas—one for Lord Clarendon in 1851, and the other for Lord St. Germans in 1854, besides a most interesting paper upon the financial position of Ireland, contributed by the late Mr. Murray, the then chief officer of the Provincial Bank. In the volume upon the condition of Ireland in the year 1860, there appears in the handwriting of Sir Thomas an elaborate essay tracing the progress of Ireland from the Union in 1800, which as appears from a letter of Lord Cardwell’s, was specially prepared for him at his own request when Chief Secretary for Ireland. To this essay there is prefixed a note by Sir Thomas, though it is evident that it was added a long time after 1860, and probably but a short time before his death. I give it here as it stands, affording as it does a remarkable refutation of the charge that the interests of Ireland have always been disregarded by English governments.

"The object of every successive government, however, differing in the politics and views of party, have been to anticipate and assist the wants and energies of the people of all classes and creeds. I say of every government, for I have been for more than thirty years more or less closely in contact with every Irish government in pursuit of industrial and social objects; and in this respect I never could see any difference between them."

One large volume which deals exclusively with the Irish jury system, is of especial interest; and as it affords a good illustration of the general arrangement and formation of these books, I have left it upon the table for inspection by the meeting. It opens with copious extracts from the public press demonstrating the necessity of reform: and then we have the introduction of Lord O’Hagan’s Act in 1871, with the discussions thereon, until the final passing of the Act. Next we find unceasing complaints as to the working of this Act, and the frequent attempts at reform are traced down to the year 1878.

Another volume of equal interest deals with the question of Irish Taxation. It opens with several letters from Mr. Gladstone in reference to the cry that was being raised in 1863, as to the injustice of Irish Taxation, and then follows an account of the Parliamentary Committee appointed to consider the question in 1864, and presided over by Colonel Dunne, and the remaining history of the question is traced to the year 1876.

The spirit which animated Sir Thomas Larcom in all these works
is perhaps best indicated by the closing passage of the address which he delivered as Vice-President of this Society on the 18th of June, 1850, when the country was just recovering from the effects of the famine of 1847.

After referring to some evidence of progress in Ireland, he concludes in words that have an application at the present moment:

"There is a dark side indeed to this picture, it is for the future that the horizon glows into hope. The present is yet dreary; we cannot in the temporary exultation of a favourable harvest forget that its benefits will not immediately reach the desolation of Kilrush, cultivate abandoned fields, or obliterate the footsteps of disease and death. But we may hope that the worst is passed—a gloomy night may herald a brighter day. We are not to despair, but to exert ourselves to devote all our energies and faculties to the task. Every one of us, in his appointed station, must bend to the oar; every man must do his duty, and look in confidence for that blessing on our labours which never fails those who seek it in honesty and truth."

Time will not permit me to deal at any further length with this valuable series of 136 volumes, every one of which would well repay perusal. Two volumes give the history of Land Registration before and subsequent to the passing of Lord Romilly's Act, with an account of the efforts made by Sir Thomas Larcom to have the Ordnance Survey made available for the purpose. Trades Unions and their combinations from the years 1870 to 1874 occupy two volumes, while others are devoted to the consideration of such municipal reforms as the establishment of a Fire Brigade, the opening of New Cattle Markets, and of Stephen's Green, and the rebuilding of Carlisle Bridge—reforms which have since passed from the region of discussion to become existing realities.

The interest evinced by Sir Thomas Larcom in the Statistical Society is testified to in a remarkable way, by the care with which the accounts of its meetings and its published reports have been preserved by him. In a volume of pamphlets I find a copy of the prospectus issued by this Society upon its foundation in 1847, with the name of Captain Thomas Larcom as one of the two first Vice-Presidents; and in the same volume he has inserted the original manuscript of a speech delivered by him when proposing, at a meeting called for the purpose in 1847, that a Statistical Society should be founded in Dublin. From these facts we learn not only the importance of attaching to our ranks and interesting in our pursuits men in official positions like the late Sir Thomas Larcom, but we can also appreciate the share that the discussions and publications of this Society contributes to the solution of social and political problems in Ireland, and can afford to despise the blindness of those who can see in our pursuits nothing but what is visionary and impracticable.

To the character of Sir Thomas Larcom himself these volumes bear a remarkable testimony—showing as they do the unremitting industry and honest determination with which he applied himself to the duties of his office. In the most dangerous and doubtful crises he never abandoned the post of duty; but, as Lord Cardwell says in a letter to him in the year 1868, he remained like a sailor tied to the helm in a dark night and on a stormy sea. From the year
1850 to his death in 1879, some years after retiring from office, his interest in collecting materials for these volumes which he has bequeathed to our Society seems never to have flagged, except upon the occasion of Lord Carlisle’s death in 1864. Upon this event he writes as follows:—

"Without the stimulus of having to prepare information for that good man and dear friend, I should hardly have taken the trouble year by year to collect and methodise the numerous original papers which the former volumes of this series contain; and it is not likely I shall continue it, nor is it necessary, for able men with sufficient leisure to do so better than I can, are now available."

In 1867 he was offered the presidency of the Statistical Society; but this was only a year before he retired from the office of Under-Secretary for Ireland on account of broken health. He has preserved in the volume for 1867 on Irish Railways, the letter of one of the Secretaries referring to his being unable to accept the presidency.

"I regret your decision about the Statistical Society; but we could not think of pressing you in the slightest degree. Your acceptance would have been agreeable to the Society, as you are an original Vice-President, elected in 1847, on account of your services on the Census of 1841, and you are generally looked up to as the founder of scientific statistical research in Ireland. Your time is, however, so occupied that the slightest addition to your engagements is a burden which we at first hesitated to impose, and which you very fairly ask to be relieved from."

He had been honoured by the Queen with many marks of approbation for his services—a Baronetcy, Knight Commander of the Bath, and Privy Councillor—and allowed to retire on the highest pension, full pay, yet his preserving this letter shows how he appreciated the estimation in which he was held by those who cultivated statistical science in Ireland; and he entrusted the Society with the remarkable collection which I have endeavoured to describe.

It is right to notice that Sir Thomas Larcom has left to the Royal Irish Academy and to the Library of Trinity College other collections.

So far back as 1860 he had induced the Government to present to the Royal Irish Academy, 149 volumes of materials for the Ordnance Survey, which had been arranged by him when in charge of that department, containing extracts from the reports and correspondence, history of the names of each parish or place of interest in Ireland, opinions of the General on many of them, with explanations of the names.

At his death he bequeathed from 200 to 300 volumes to the Academy, relating to Irish History and Irish Antiquities.

To the Library of Trinity College he left 60 volumes of letters and papers relating to Church and University Questions, and Religious Dissensions, and Orange Anniversaries, bound in the same manner as the 136 volumes above described in the bequest to the Statistical Society. He also left to Trinity College 20 volumes of pamphlets and books on the same subjects of Religion and Education.

It is probable that the result of his presentation in 1860, in facilitating the production of that remarkable book, Joye’s Irish Names,
led to the hope that his presentation to the Statistical Society and to Trinity College would prove equally valuable to the production of historical, and statistical, and economic works on Ireland.

Few men have spent a more industrious life than Sir Thomas Larcom, in his forty-one years of public service in Ireland, commencing with a subordinate position on the Ordnance Survey, and ending with the high office of Under-Secretary; and few men have provided for the public being taken into council so soon after their death, to judge of their work and the motives by which they were actuated in their service for their country; and few have left such traces on the sands of time to help those who come after them in their work.

VII.—Report of Council on Mr. Jephson's Suggestions as to Census for 1881.

[Read, 20th April, 1880.]

Dublin, 14th February, 1880.

Sir,

The Council of this Society have had under their consideration the suggestions in the enclosed paper of Mr. Henry Jephson, read at the Society's meeting on the 17th inst., as to the importance of including in the census of 1881:—(1) The number of families and persons resident on farm holdings in Ireland of different sizes: and (2) Statistics of migratory agricultural labourers employed for upwards of six weeks in the year outside the electoral divisions or unions in which they reside, or out of Ireland.

The Council think Mr. Jephson's suggestions are, for the reasons stated in the paper, most valuable, and tend to increase the value of statistical science in Ireland.

Having regard to the fact that the enumerators employed for the census in Ireland are the Royal Irish Constabulary, who in June and October each year visit every agricultural holding for the purpose of collecting the agricultural statistics—first of acreage under crop, then of produce of crops—for the Registrar-General, who will be connected with the census, they think Mr. Jephson's plan could be carried out with great ease and without much expense; and by the constabulary checking it themselves, or (as in the case of the agricultural statistics) supplying the information as to the labourers; this branch of the statistics would have the same high character for reliability that the Irish agricultural statistics, collected by the Registrar-General's department, have long had.

The Council think it right to add, that as the Royal Irish Constabulary will visit each holding in Ireland in June next, at the time when the usual migration of labourers in an ordinary year will be at its maximum, and again in October, when it is at a minimum, it would be a matter of great importance to include in the agricultural statistics of 1880 some statistics as to how the men and youths