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STATISTICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

MAY, 1843.

*Ninth Annual Report of the Council of the Statistical Society of
London. Session, 1842-3.*

IN rendering a favourable account of the past year's labours and present finances of the Society, the Council feel themselves called upon to congratulate its Fellows upon the importance to which Statistics are attaining in society and in legislation, not in England alone, but throughout Europe; and upon the augmented estimation in which they are held as tests to, and checks upon, hypothetical reasoning in the moral and political sciences; an advance in the application of mathematical accuracy to the study of social phenomena, to which the labours of this Society have materially conduced. Errors as to the facts which illustrate the actual condition and prospects of society are thus daily exploded, and more just data are supplied for the exertions of the philanthropist, the judgment of the legislator, and the speculations of the reasoner. The latter is compelled to amend his conjectures as often as they are irreconcilable with facts newly established by scientific observation; and from this correction results the suggestion of new problems, to be solved by more extended or more penetrating observations. To make, to register, and to reduce these observations is the express province of the *statist*; and upon his *statistics* of the facts which illustrate the condition and prospects of society must mainly hinge our advancement in that knowledge of human interests in the aggregate to which it is no longer possible to deny the name of science.

The progress already made in bringing social phenomena under a mathematical accuracy of observation has been such as to render the pursuit of statistical inquiries henceforth a necessity of the age, at the same time that it is one of its most honorable characteristics. Nor can the Fellows estimate too highly the encouragement given to such inquiries by his Royal Highness Prince Albert, in his acceptance of the office of Patron of this Society, and in his recent attendance at one of its monthly meetings, at the same time that it calls forth a lively sense of the honour conferred upon them.

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Witnessing' this progress, the Council have ever hoped for more and still more active exertion on the part of the Fellows of the Society, at the same time that they could not conceal from themselves the value of what was really being accomplished. In pursuit of their design to make the Society the depository of all the augmenting masses of statistical information, they have continued to economise their expenditure on the collection of original data; well knowing that more were being collected by various public departments and associations, than could well be reduced to an available form; at the same time that several philanthropic individuals were making statistical surveys at their own expense. They therefore limited their expenditure on original inquiries to a grant of 25*l.* to the Education Committee, and one of 5*l.* to the Hospital Statistics Committee.

The former Committee having completed the statistics of Education in the Finsbury district of the metropolis, undertook, under the direction of the Rev. E. W. Edgell, to whom the Society is under great obligation for his personal exertions and pecuniary aid in these inquiries, to make the documents of the census the basis of a more rapid educational survey of the remaining portions of the metropolis north of the Thames; and for this purpose the Census Commissioners kindly gave access to the returns relating to those districts. This survey has already been extended through the city of London, containing a population of 129,251, with 12,282 children at school; through the borough of Marylebone, exclusive of the part north of the New Road, containing 150,000 inhabitants, and 17,239 children at school; through the district of St. George's in the East, containing 38,508 inhabitants; and through part of St. Mary's Whitechapel, containing 30,733 inhabitants, and its results will be laid before the Society in the course of the present session.

The Hospital Statistics Committee has been occupied during the past year with two principal objects; one of which was the contrivance of a mode of registering the cases in hospitals, more complete than any hitherto in use in most of those institutions, which should secure, as far as possible, the regular registration of the particulars of greatest statistical importance; and the other, to procure the adoption, by the various hospitals, infirmaries, &c., in the kingdom, of the plan of registration thought most desirable by the Committee. The endeavours of the Committee, by local inquiries, and personal explanations, and official and private correspondence, to accomplish those objects, have had very considerable and encouraging success; and already a method, conformable to their views, of uniformly recording the leading features of the cases treated, has been adopted in a large majority of the London hospitals. This is the first step towards the collection of accurate and adequate data for the solution of many questions of high scientific and practical importance; and there can be no doubt that in due time the provincial infirmaries, to each of which a circular of explanation and illustrative papers have

been forwarded, will follow the example of the metropolitan hospitals. Another object has occupied the attention of the committee, viz., the procuring returns from the various general hospitals in London, of the patients in those institutions on one particular day in January, with their ages, sexes, occupations, and diseases, and the duration of their several illnesses up to the day of making the return. In this object, also, the committee has had much success, having now obtained a return from every hospital to which application was made. To those documents (which are at present undergoing reduction with a view to a report) the committee attach considerable value, as data for determining the present distribution of sickness according to age, sex, &c.; and the Council consider it their duty to bring to the notice of the Society the liberality with which the advances of the Committee have in almost all cases been met, and the gratifying facilities that have been afforded them, not only by the medical officers whose superior acquaintance with the usefulness of such inquiries might naturally be expected to incline them to render assistance, but also by the non-professional authorities, by whose ready acquiescence the Committee have felt themselves in no common degree encouraged and obliged.

Among the original inquiries must also be mentioned that made by Lord Viscount Sandon, one of the vice-presidents of the Society, into the condition of the working classes in the Inner Ward of St. George's, Westminster, through the agency of your assistant secretary, Mr. C. R. Weld, and which called forth that made by the Rev. E. Wyatt Edgell into the state of education in the same district of the metropolis. The results of these investigations were kindly communicated to the Society at its first meeting in the present session; and the liberal exertions of Lord Sandon in this instance have already found an imitator in his Grace the Duke of Bedford, who has taken steps for an analogous survey among his own numerous tenantry.

For statistical information arranged, digested, or reduced from public documents, or the records of public departments and offices, or foreign publications, the council has relied upon the generous exertions of individual fellows. The most laborious instances of such exertion were in the *Statistics of the Municipal Institutions of the English Towns*, read at the last ordinary meeting of the past session by Mr. Fletcher; and the *Statistics of the Ages of the English Population*, according to the Census of 1841, by Mr. Porter, read at the second ordinary meeting of the present session; but the council hope that a branch of its objects, which admits of being pursued by many with so much gratification to themselves, and so much advantage to the Society at large, will be more extensively cultivated.

With regard to the extension of statistical information, the increased attendance at the ordinary meetings, and at the rooms of the Society, show an augmented interest in its proceedings, which is likewise evinced by an increased sale of the *Journal*, to the newly-opened volume of

which some additions and improvements have been made which it is hoped will tend to augment its value and reputation. It may be mentioned also, that, in settling accounts with the late publisher of the *Journal*, Mr. Knight, on occasion of the transfer of the publication to Mr. Parker, the council have thought it advisable, since the commencement of the present year, to accept the offer made by that gentleman of the whole remaining stock of the first year's *Journals*, published monthly on his own account, in payment of the sum of 50*l.* 16*s.*, due to the Society; an arrangement affording ample compensation to the Society, at the same time that it places at its disposal the whole series of its publications. This outlay has, however, somewhat impeded the progress of purchases for the library; but, by the liberality of many fellows both at home and abroad, it is being enriched by many valuable contributions; and some recent arrangements for its custody make whatever it contains available with certainty and readiness.

A great share of attention has been bestowed by the council upon the search for apartments offering greater conveniences at a rent within the means of the Society; and they hope to be enabled to conclude arrangements, in the course of the present session, for a set which have very great advantages of situation, size, and accessibility.

The number of ordinary members at present on the books is 416; the elections having somewhat preponderated over the withdrawals, though the deaths turn the scale against an increase; and in the course of the year the Society have been pleased to elect, on the recommendation of the council, M. Misson, of the Statistical Department at Brussels, to be a foreign honorary member, and Mr. Banfield, of Wiesbaden, to be a corresponding member of their body.

The abstract of receipts and expenditure during the past year, which accompanies the auditors' report, gives a very satisfactory view of the Society's finances; its real income having rather increased, except that sixteen fewer annual subscriptions have actually been collected in the last year than in the one preceding. On the other hand, economy in almost every department of the expenditure has more than counterbalanced this deficiency, even were it more than a mere delay of payment; and permitted the council to make the grants to committees, and the purchases of journals already noticed; while the assets are fully equal to the liabilities, and indeed have already been paid up, with the exception of one item. The Society, therefore, is without debt, and its funded property is undiminished.
