

LETTER

FROM

HENRY JOY AND JOHN BOYD, ESQRS.

SECRETARIES TO THE DUBLIN SOCIETY,

TO THE

RIGHT HON. CHARLES GRANT,

ACCOMPANYING THE REPORT

ON THE

STATE OF THE SOCIETY.

DANIEL GRAISBERRY, PRINTER TO THE DUBLIN SOCIETY.

1820.

Houses of the Oireachtas

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HANDED GRAVESEND, TRINITY TO THE DUBLIN SOCIETY.

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SIR,

IN reply to your letter of the 23d of August, addressed to the Dublin Society, we are directed by that body to transmit to you a copy of the Report presented to it by the Committee appointed to inquire into the state of the Society; to which are annexed the accounts of the Society from the year 1784, the most remote period to which any existing document has enabled the Committee to direct its inquiries. The Report is necessarily voluminous; but we hope it will be considered satisfactory.

The Dublin Society originated in the patriotic endeavours of a few Noblemen and Gentlemen to improve their native country, and was at first supported by private subscriptions. But a Society composed of the first men in the community, associated for the purpose of encouraging Arts and Manufactures, could not long escape the notice, or be deemed unworthy of the encouragement of the Legislature. So early as the first year of his present Majesty's reign a sum of £12,000 was granted to the Dublin Society, to be applied to the purposes of its institution. At that period it was found necessary to sustain the manufactures and to encourage the trade of Ireland by considerable bounties: and the distribution of those bounties was uniformly confided to the zeal and the judgment of the Dublin Society. But when, by being thrown open, the commerce of Ireland became extended, and wealth flowed in, the necessity for

bounties rapidly declined ; and Arts and Manufactures found their best support in the encreased demand of the consumer. The utility of such a body as the Dublin Society, in such a country as Ireland, had been too sensibly felt, and was too clearly understood to permit it to languish ; and from the distribution of bounties, now ceasing to be necessary, the Legislature directed the views of the Society to the dissemination of useful knowledge. In 1785 the Act, which contained the grant to the Society, directed that, after certain specific objects, the residue of its funds should be applied to the establishment of Drawing schools, and “ such useful sciences,” as the Society should think fit.—Thus the first impulse towards science was given by the Legislature.—In 1790 the Legislature directed, that a Botanic garden should be established and maintained.—In 1792 it enjoined the Society to turn its attention to the study of mineralogy, and directed, that even the subscriptions of its Members, (that fund which might be considered as peculiarly devoted to the original purposes of the association) should be applied to the purchase of a cabinet of minerals.—The importance of the study of mineralogy in a country abounding in mines was thus strongly impressed on the mind of the Legislature, at a time when that science was known only by name in Britain. The death of Mr. Leské, and the sale of his valuable cabinet, afforded an opportunity of complying with the wishes of the Legislature : nor was the aid of that body wanting on the occasion. A considerable sum was voted for the purchase of this cabinet, and for erecting an extensive repository for it. At this period the affairs of the Society were principally under the management of the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, and other distinguished and patriotic members of the Legislature. To such men it was impossible that the importance of the study of Chemistry, and its influence on the Arts, could be unknown. Chemistry was justly deemed

by them, acquainted as they were with the views of the Legislature, as among the "useful Sciences," to which Parliament had called the attention of the Society, and accordingly the cultivation of Chemistry was added to that of Mineralogy, and an able professor was brought from the University of Oxford to teach both sciences. Still further, under the same auspices, a lectureship in Natural Philosophy was established : and thus the Society was moulded by the very hand of the Legislature into that form, which it has hitherto retained. The protection afforded to the Society by the Irish Legislature was uniform. In 1800, one of the last acts of the Parliament of Ireland had for its object the maintenance of the Dublin Society. So large a sum as £15,000 was voted for the purposes of the institution.—It was directed to be applied (amongst other things) for the maintenance of the Botanical garden ; the salaries of the different professors ; the establishment of a Veterinary school ; the erection of Drawing schools ; the extension of the Library, Mineralogical and other Museums, and the Chemical Laboratory : the Parliament thus evincing, to the latest hour of its existence, its sense of the value of this Society, and committing, with its dying breath, its favourite Institution to the protection of that body, to which it was about to transfer the superintendence of the interests of Ireland—nor has it been deceived.

The United Parliament has continued to extend its fostering care to the Society committed to its charge. It has liberally afforded the means of maintaining that institution, which local knowledge had deemed so valuable to Ireland ; and it will, no doubt, continue to do so as long as the Society shall evince the same integrity and zeal, which now distinguish it. The objects, to which the Society directs its attention are, besides Husbandry, the maintenance of the Botanical garden, the cultivation of the studies of Botany, Chemistry, Mineralogy, Geology, Practical Mining, Natu-

ral Philosophy, and the Veterinary art ; in all of which lectures are delivered gratuitously to the public by the respective Professors ; to which must be added the support of the Drawing schools ; in which Figure, Landscape, Ornamental and Architectural drawing and modelling are taught gratuitously to all young persons, who evince any talent for those arts.—If, Sir, there be any persons, who, unable to see the necessary connexion which the Sciences taught within these walls have with the useful arts, may be disposed to consider our attention to those Sciences as a departure from the original objects of the Institution, this short account of the origin and progress of the Society will serve to convince them, that in disseminating scientific knowledge we are obeying the last commands of the Irish Legislature, and following, as it were, the dying injunctions of the parent of the institution.—Yet will the stranger, when he first enters the Society's house, naturally feel some disappointment—his imagination will lead him to expect in this National Institution every thing to please the eye or to gratify curiosity.—He will ask, where are our splendid collections, our rare books, our curious manuscripts ? To such we must answer, that it is not in these collections that the Society prides itself—It is not in that which it retains, but in that which it imparts, that its principal merit consists. In the splendour of their possessions other institutions may excel it, but in the dissemination of useful knowledge none ever equalled it.—It is difficult to trace back the current of improvement to its source.—The more generally instruction is diffused, the less discernible are the channels, through which it flows—Yet, there are not wanting many instances, in which improvement in the Arts can be distinctly referred to the instruction communicated by the Society.—Some of them are alluded to in the Report ; others might be added.—In the department of the Fine Arts a list is given of distinguished Artists, the first dawnings of whose genius opened under the auspices of the Dublin Society ; leaving it to be imagined how much native

talent would be developed by the formation of a school for Painting and Sculpture under masters of the first eminence.

We have thus, Sir, endeavoured to lay before you the objects, which occupy the attention of the Dublin Society : and when the nature, variety, and importance of those objects are considered, we trust that the Society has justified the confidence, reposed in it by Parliament, by a faithful discharge of its duty, and a just administration of the funds committed to its care. In these times of economy and retrenchment we ought not, perhaps, to look for an extension of the public bounty ; but we hope and trust, that that support, which the Society has been accustomed to receive, will not be withdrawn, or an institution so beneficial to Ireland be suffered to decay ;—that that bounty, which commenced with the reign of our venerable Monarch, may not terminate with it ; and that, whilst in common with the rest of the empire Ireland may deplore the many virtues, which that event will have withdrawn from the world, she may not, in the decay of her favourite institution, have to lament a calamity peculiarly her own.

We have the honor to be,
Sir,

With much respect,
Your most obedient humble Servants,

HENRY JOY,
JOHN BOYD,

Secretaries to the Dublin Society.

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With much respect,
Your most obedient servant,
JOHN BOND, Secretary to the Dublin Society.