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ECONOMIC MUSEUMS.

A SHORT time since, in an article on "Remarkable Exhibitions," we called attention to the Economic Museum which Mr. T. Twining, of Twickenham, had called into existence.

That gentleman, in 1857, addressed a communication to the Chairman of the Council of the Society of Arts, in which the following passages occur:—"The experience acquired since 1847, as a member of the Managing Committee of the Labourers' Friend Society, has led me to a conviction that much of the privation, discomfort, and ill-health to which the working-classes are subject in this and other countries, and many of the errors and failures of the friends of the poor in their benevolent endeavours, might be avoided by a more general diffusion of that kind of practical knowledge, in matters of domestic and sanitary economy, which may be termed the science of common life. I perceived, at the same time, that the only way to make that knowledge popular was to offer it in an easy, familiar, and attractive form; and thus I was naturally led to the plan of establishing exhibitions and permanent museums of domestic economy."

Mr. Twining had, in fact, been quietly working out this theory since the year 1850. In 1855 it was fully developed in a memorandum addressed by him to Lord Ebrington. Copies of this memorandum were printed, and extensively distributed throughout Great Britain and the Colonies. It was an able document upon the subject of which it treated, and we may judge its general character from the following extract:—"Manufacturers, tradesmen, and mechanics, work their inventive abilities (as a rule) in a business-like manner. Men of science, more especially so-called, have not yet, generally speaking, attained to such a standing in this country as to be able to lay aside the thoughts of themselves and their families. Even amateurs, though their position may raise them above pecuniary considerations, are seldom above the temptation of bringing out that which may be conspicuous, in preference to that which may be useful. In short, the homage of knowledge and ingenuity is very naturally paid to those who can best give an acceptable return; and whilst every appliance of Science and Art is called into requisition to meet the fastidious fancies of the rich, and to supply novelties for the cravings of fashion, the requirements of the humbler classes are comparatively overlooked."

The writer evidently saw one of the great causes of the destitution and criminality which disfigure the annals of our own, and other countries, and he determined also to point out the remedy, and, if possible, employ it. The publication of the memorandum and the persevering industry of its framer were soon responded to and rewarded. Economic Exhibitions of a temporary kind were inaugurated at Paris in 1855, at Brussels in 1856, and at Vienna in 1857. These were all successful in a very high degree. At the South Kensington Museum, too, Mr. Twining succeeded in getting a section appropriated to the purpose he had in view. This was called "The Department of Domestic Economy, comprising Illustrations of Everyday Life for the Working-classes;" and of its nature and usefulness it is unnecessary for us here to speak.

Encouraged by the success of the embryo collection at South Kensington, which had been formed there permissively and experimentally, Mr. Twining removed the exhibition to the Polytechnic Institution, and has now finally removed it to Perryn House, near the railway station, Twickenham, for convenience and more complete development. It is, in fact, as the example for a grand Metropolitan Economic Museum, and for branch museums throughout the country, that the founder of the present institution at Twickenham desires that institution to be regarded. He is, indeed, of opinion that Economic collections should be established on all hands, whose object would be to impart to all classes, and especially to those whose income is small, the "knowledge of common things, or science of every-day life." He would have them show, for instance, what sort of dwellings they should live in to secure health and comfort, and what improvements in household management may be derived from the discoveries of science, or from other sources. In short, he would have the Economic Museum teach the working-classes how to live with judgment, and get the best money's worth for their money.

It would be difficult to conceive more praiseworthy objects than those sketched out by Mr. Twining, and it is satisfactory to know that they are not the visions of a philanthropic dreamer, but the aims of a sterling, steadfast, and determined man.

In the establishment of the Economic Museum at Perryn House, we see an earnest of future and permanent good to the working classes of this country. It is an exemplification of what the will and energy of one man may accomplish, when the will and energy are governed by right principles and guided to practical ends. We do not despair, indeed, of seeing "London with its Economic Museum on the fullest scale, provincial towns with appointed collectors, Mechanics' Institutions, with rooms allotted to the illustrations of common life, Lecturers supplied with portable Economic Collections and Educational Establishments, down to Village Schools with their Economiums or Cabinets of Useful Objects." When this state of things shall have arisen—and it is no utopia that we are picturing—how much of misery, how much of degradation, and how much of crime, will be in a fair way of being banished for ever from among us? The barriers between classes which selfishness has created, and which ignorance maintains, will be thrown down, and that sympathy, of which the good Judge Talford spoke, and which, with his dying breath he invoked, will disseminate its divine influence on all around. The great merits of Mr. Twining's scheme of popular education, are its practicability and freedom from any shade of sectarianism. Its advantages will not and cannot be confined to any one class, sect, denomination, or sex, but to the humbler portion of the community, irrespective of all distinctions, the good resulting from its realization must be considerable.

Amid the din and clatter made about iron ships, rifled guns, submerged vessels, projectiles, targets, and fortifications, it is pleasant to turn aside for an instant and look approvingly upon the efforts which are being made for the amelioration of the troubles, difficulties, and cares which beset those whose "lot it is to labour."

The Perryn House Economic Model Museum is divided into nine classes, as follows:—

- Class I.—Building Designs.
- Class II.—Building Materials.
- Class III.—Furniture.

Class IV.—Clothing.

Class V.—Food, Fuel, and other Household Stores.

Class VI.—Health.

Class VII.—Home Education, Self-Instruction, Recreation.

Class VIII.—Miscellaneous.

Class IX.—The Library.

The Museum is open to the public only on Wednesdays and Saturdays, from 2 to 5 p.m., on the presentation of tickets of admission, which may be obtained from Mr. Twining, or at the Society of Arts, Adelphi, London. The founder of the Museum is entitled to expect co-operation, and we cordially invoke its aid in so good a cause. The Library as it exists at present is admirable, but its extension by donations of eligible books is a thing to be desired.

NAVAL ARMOUR COMMISSION.

WE call attention to the letter of our correspondent, "A Civilian," in this day's impression. His letter to the *Times* is outspoken, and discloses a series of contradictory reports and opinions on the naval defence question. We confess, however, our surprise, that on a question of so momentous a character, the *Times* has not, on this occasion, displayed that candour in acknowledging itself to have been in the wrong, and that frankness in changing its policy when great national interests are at stake, which we have often admired, and which are its best titles to its vast popularity and circulation, as an exponent of public opinion. We make these remarks on a contemporary with the more freedom, because the strictures of our correspondent do not impugn its good faith, but are addressed to a "graphic" reporter who, amidst the din of artillery, had to record events of an exciting and novel character, and could not avoid receiving the impressions of the day. There is, however, another point of view which induces us to regard this matter in a serious light. Whether the *Times* is influenced by its reporter, or is blind to the truth, we cannot tell; but, unfortunately, its reports, under the head of "Military and Naval Intelligence," are regarded by the public as quasi official. Not only in England, but also in foreign countries, they are read with the same interest as the semi-official or "communiqué" articles of the *Moniteur* and other French journals. Nor does this impression on the public mind appear to be unfounded, for the minuteness and regularity with which military and naval news are published daily in the *Times* go far to prove they are supplied from official sources, and it will be in the recollection of our readers that a few days ago the Secretary to the Admiralty, in his place in the House of Commons, referred to the report in the *Times* as a faithful account of the experiments at Shoeburyness with the new Armstrong gun.

Why do we thus pertinaciously dwell on this subject? The answer is ready. Because it is one of such intense national importance that it has not had its equal in our time. In one day, as it were, England is stripped of her naval power. For defence or offence she is reduced to the level of the smallest maritime state, and two powerful nations, France and the United States, in the new race of naval supremacy, have got the start, and are using prodigious efforts to outstrip us. This is no light matter. The French journals inform us, that in a short time a squadron of evolution of six iron-plated men of war will be at sea, whilst there is not a shadow of a doubt as to the fact, that with iron-cased ships, gunboats, floating batteries, and disembarkation