

The Industrial Exhibition of 1851.

On Tuesday, there was a numerous attendance of our gentry, merchants, traders, manufacturers, &c., convened by the Mayor, by circular, to receive Mr. Wentworth Dilke, Esq., and Captain Boscowen Ibbetson, a deputation from London,—charged by Prince Albert, as President of the Society of Arts, to explain his royal highness's proposal for establishing, in the metropolis, in the year 1851, an exhibition of the works of art and manufactures of all nations.—The Mayor [S. Bignold, Esq.] was called to the chair; and amongst the gentlemen present we noticed

The Marquis of Douro, M.P., the Hon. and Very Rev. the Dean, Sir J. P. Boileau, Bart., Major-General Sir R. J. Harvey, the Sheriff of Norwich [R. Chamberlain, Esq.], Rev. Canon Wodehouse, Rev. Professor Sedgwick, Rev. Dr. Woolley, Rev. S. F. Bignold, Rev. A. B. Power, J. Scott, Esq., [Bangay], Rev. J. Crompton, Captain Money, Horatio Bellingbrooke, Esq., J. H. Barnard, Esq., J. Betts, Esq., Dr. Tawke, Dr. George Hall, A. A. H. Beckwith, Esq., John Skipper, Esq., H. S. Patteson, Esq., J. B. Morgan, Esq., T. Bignold, Esq., T. Brightwell, Esq., G. E. Tuck, Esq., Arthur Dalrymple, Esq., Edward Field, Esq., C. S. Gilman, Esq., F. E. Watson, Esq., J. Barwell, Esq., W. Geary, Esq., J. Saiter, Esq., R. W. Blake, Esq., J. Norgate, Esq., W. Wilde, Esq., J. W. Dawson, Esq., Mr. Middleton, Mr. Hindes, Mr. Colman, Mr. Batchelor, Mr. Blakely, Mr. Ladell, Mr. Clabbara, Mr. Jay, Mr. O. W. Minns, Mr. Pymar, Mr. Bateman, Mr. Shaw, Mr. Harrod, Mr. Woolner, Mr. Baker, &c., &c.

Sir J. P. BOILEAU said, Gentlemen, I believe you are all aware, that we are met this day for the purpose of receiving a most important communication, in regard to the trade and manufactures of this city and the whole world, from a deputation sent by his Royal Highness Prince Albert. The Mayor has been good enough to call the meeting. He is present, and I am sure we cannot do better than vote him, by acclamation, into the chair.—[Applause.]

The Mayor said, a very few words from myself will be sufficient to open the proceedings of the meeting. You are all aware, by the circular addressed to and sent among the principal citizens, of the objects to which I propose to draw your attention at this meeting. It is to receive a deputation to explain a proposal which has originated with his Royal Highness Prince Albert, to establish a great exhibition of the works of art and manufactures of all nations, in 1851, in the metropolis of this country. It would be premature in me, before any explanations are given by the deputation, to state what my own feelings are on the subject: but I may say, it immediately struck me as a measure calculated to advance the best interests of the country in general. I have no hesitation in soliciting this friendly co-operation of the citizens in carrying out the proposal: I am sure, that British manufacturers need fear nothing from the rivalry of other nations. The productions of other nations being placed before the British manufacturer will be the means of eliciting his painstaking and skill to take care that Britain is not left in the shade in any way. Every one must admit, that to the illustrious Prince who had suggested the idea, and patronized the design, the country owed a deep debt of gratitude.—I have to announce, that the individuals selected to attend as a deputation, are Mr. Dilke and Captain Ibbetson, and after you have heard from those gentlemen such explanations as they may feel empowered to offer to us upon the project, I shall call upon the citizens to propose and second resolutions for the purpose of eliciting their opinions upon it.

Mr. C. W. DILKE then said, I have the honour of attending here by the direction of his Royal Highness Prince Albert, to bring under your consideration the proposal which he is about to submit to government, for the establishment of a grand exhibition of the industry of all nations. It has long been felt as strange, that while England stands pre-eminent in the world for her manufactures, she has never yet attempted a public exhibition similar to those held in other countries. Our neighbours, the French, for the last fifty years, have held similar expositions. They were commenced by the Directory, continued by the Consulate, also under the Empire, and by him that boasted of the title of the *bourgeois king*, and now under the President of the Republic. I need hardly give a stronger proof how beneficial such exhibitions have been considered to that country. If any such proof were wanting, I could easily furnish it by simply referring to the prizes; when it will be found that any article most rewarded at any exhibition was invariably the most successful, and the most approved of, on the next occasion. This alone would prove that manufacturers themselves had found it beneficial, but another proof might be given in this circumstance. The year 1798 was the occasion of the first meeting in France, under the Directory, when there were only 110 exhibitors. Now it will be found, on the examination of the documents of the French government, that these numbers went on in an increasing ratio: for in 1801, on the occasion of the second exhibition, there were 229 exhibitors; in 1802, there were 540; in 1806, there were 1422; in 1819, there were 1662; in 1823, there were 1642, that being the only year in which there was a falling off.—

In other years the numbers have been continually increasing. In 1827, there were 1795; in 1831, there were 2,447; in 1839, there were 3,281; in 1844, there were 3,900; whilst at the exhibition which has just closed, there were 4,491. France was followed in amicable rivalry by Belgium, Prussia, Bavaria, Austria, Spain, Sweden, and Russia; while England has attempted nothing but in her agricultural and horticultural meetings, till a few years since, when the Society of Arts determined to open rooms for a couple of months in each year, in order to collect together a small exhibition, by way of educating the mind of the public for the great exhibition then contemplated. Other attempts were made by the Chamber of Commerce in Manchester, and by the men of Birmingham; efforts which were most worthy ones, and have been most successful, as all can testify who have been at Birmingham, within the last month.—At the meeting of the Society of Arts, early in the summer of this year, his Royal Highness said, in his opinion, the time had come when England was prepared for, and when it might be proposed to have, an exhibition worthy of England and worthy of the world. [Applause.] But, in the first instance, the Prince was anxious that the leading manufacturers should be privately consulted as to their views. His Royal Highness felt, that though an exhibition might be made successful even if they were not unanimously of opinion, yet their cordial co-operation could not fail to render it worthy of the country. A deputation accordingly visited the principal manufacturing towns of England, Scotland, and Ireland; and, I might say, never was a proposal received more unanimously. The answer has been in simple words to these: "We will second the efforts of the Prince, we will do all that it befits us to do, and we are delighted at the proposal." Such a resolution could not be otherwise than animating to the Prince. At the same time, he considered that while it was supported by the manufacturing interest, it was advisable that the leading inhabitants of various towns should be consulted, before the proposal was brought under the consideration of Her Majesty's government. With this view, Capt. Ibbetson and I were instructed by his Royal Highness to visit this neighbourhood and to explain his views. In accepting this office we could not but feel that we were in a very delicate position. We were called upon to explain the views of a project with which it would be hardly decorous for us, as representatives, however humble, of his Royal Highness, to expatiate on; and we feel that in addressing an audience we are bound to consider ourselves as representatives of the Prince, and therefore we simply submit the statement of his views. The course I am about to take is simply to read extracts of the opinions of those consulted in different parts of the kingdom. I shall read the proposal of the Prince's own views, after they had been presented to the Royal Society of Arts, and I shall couple with these certain extracts from minutes at the meetings at Buckingham-palace and Osborne-house. In reading these, I am specially instructed to call your attention to one fact,—that though I read print, nothing is settled. I shall allude to certain prizes that it is proposed to distribute, the amount I may name, but that amount is not fixed. It would be indelicate, the Prince considers, that anything should be decided upon previous to the Royal Commission being appointed, which will be called upon to award the prizes; and, I repeat, whatever I state must be taken as an outline of the Prince's views, and not as absolutely fixed. It would, perhaps, save time, if, in reading the minutes, I should enlarge upon them paragraph by paragraph where I have anything to say. The only object is, the saving time and while the paragraph is fresh in your memory. I shall first read an extract from the minutes of a meeting held at Buckingham palace on the 30th June, 1849. His Royal Highness then communicated to the members of the Society of Arts his views regarding the formation of a great collection of works of industry and art in London, in 1851, for the purposes of exhibition, and of competition, and encouragement. On this point, evidence has been taken throughout the country: and I will read the evidence of the leading parties consulted. The famous firm of Messrs. Hoyle and Sons, of Manchester, the largest manufacturers in the world, met in council, the partners being present; and were unanimously of opinion, that the proposed exhibition was most desirable; and they expressed their sense of the debt of gratitude they owed to his Royal Highness for interesting himself in this matter. Mr. Newall, of Newcastle, considered that this collection would be a benefit to every locality. The Provost of Edinburgh said, at a meeting, that he considered the preparation of such an exhibition would direct the minds of the whole world to the peaceful pursuits of industry, and by friendly competition and generous rewards, would more closely than ever cement the amicable relations of all the nations of the earth.—[Applause.]—At Paisley, there was a unanimous concurrence, at the meeting convened by the Provost, in the expression that the commission would be one of great national benefit. At a meeting held in the city of London, and the admirable reports of which in the London journals made this statement, like a twice told tale, Mr. Masterman said, he thought it most fortunate, that such a project as this should have as