



The Warminster Industrial Exhibition

Exhibitions of art and industry occupy a prominent chapter in the history of the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is true that the fullness of their effects remains to be seen, but judging from the benefits which they have already conferred, it is not too much to say that they appear destined to help most largely in diffusing a tone of industry and peaceful emulation among various classes. Commerce may indeed have its weak points in common with other things; but it cannot be denied that few of the occupations of man tend more to teach the value of peace and good-will. In short, we look upon exhibitions of industry and art as amongst the most civilizing agencies of our time. It is, therefore, with much pleasure that we announce the opening on Monday last of an industrial exhibition for the town of Warminster and the neighbouring villages. This event which went off with much success, took place in the Town-hall, the inaugural address being delivered by Lord H. Thynne, M.P. Before, however, we describe these interesting proceedings, it may not be amiss to glance for a moment at the circumstances which have led to this display of industry and ingenuity. It is now about two years since, as many of our readers well remember, that the Hon. and Rev. S. Best, of Abbots Ann, the father-in-law of the Vicar of Warminster, tried the experiment of employing his poorer parishioners during the long winter evenings in making various useful articles such as their ingenuity or taste might suggest. Mr. Best's efforts were most successful, and in 1868 an exhibition of local industry took place at Abbots Ann, which was most satisfactory in its results, the large collection of articles which were displayed evincing an amount of taste and skill which could hardly have been expected. This was followed by an exhibition of a similar character a few weeks since at Andover, the productions which were there shown being most creditable to the humble workpeople who produced them. The Vicar of Warminster (the Rev. J. E. Philipps seeing the great and beneficial results which had been achieved at Abbots Ann by his father-in-law, was instrumental in originating a similar project for Warminster, which has also proved a most decided success. It is purely an exhibition of works of personal industry with the exception of one table, whereon a few curiosities, lent by persons of the town and neighbourhood, are placed. The following parishes were united with Warminster in the work:- Bapton, Bishopstrow, Boyton, Brixton Deverill, Codford St. Mary, Codford St. Peter, Corton, Chapmanslade, Corsley, Crockerton, East Knoyle, Fonthill, Heytesbury, Horningsham, Imber, Knook, Kingston Deverill, Longbridge Deverill, Monkton Deverill, Norton Bavant, Sutton Veny, Sherrington, Stockton, and Upton Lovell.

The exhibition, as before stated, took place in the Town Hall, and included upwards of 1500 articles of almost every conceivable description. The upper room, in which the inaugural ceremony took place, was nicely decorated, and in the orchestra was a splendid display of flowers from the nursery of Mr. Wheeler, together with numerous cut flowers and flowering plants from the gardens of private gentlemen. The court below stairs and other rooms were also appropriated to purposes connected with the exhibition. The arrangements in every way were excellent, and reflect much credit on the Rev. D'Arcy Preston and the committee.

The exhibition was opened at three o'clock, by which time the upper hall was well filled. The band of the 1st Wilts (Salisbury) Rifle Volunteers were engaged for the occasion, and were stationed on a platform erected at the rear of the building. During the afternoon they played a selection of choice music, which was much appreciated. There was a large attendance of the principal families of the town and neighbourhood, amongst which we noticed the following:- Lord H. F. Thynne, M.P., Lord Heytesbury, Lady Heytesbury and Hon. Misses á Court, Colonel Everett and the Misses Everett (Fisherton-de-la-Mere), Mr. Alfred Seymour, Mr. V. F. Benett-Sandford, Mr. N. Barton and Mrs. Barton, Colonel and Mrs. Horneage, Captain Gibney, Mr. Ravenhill, the Misses Ravenhill, Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Ravenhill, Mrs. H. R. Ravenhill, Rev. J. E. and Mrs. Philipps, Rev. J. Walsh and Mrs. Walsh, Rev. D'Arcy H. and Mrs. Preston, Rev. Mason Anderson, Rev. W. B. Humphreys, Rev. W. Burbidge and Mrs. Burbidge, Rev. William and Mrs. Hickman, the Hon. Mrs. and Miss Best, Mr. Hinton, Mr. Charles and Mr. A.

Bleeck, Mr. Charles Vicary, Mr. G. T. Vicary, Dr. Alcock, Mr. Philip Grubb and Mrs. Grubb, Mr. H. J. Wakeman, Mrs. John Seagram, Mrs. C. P. and the Misses Phipps, Mr. H. P. Jones, Captain Scott, Mr. Thomas Ponting, Mrs. and the Misses Ponting, Mr. St. John Hewitt and Mrs. Hewitt, Mr. F. W. Bayly and Misses Bayly; Mr. A. Bayly, Mrs. George Temple, Miss Brown (Westbury), the Misses Bannister, Miss Thring, and many other of the principal families of the town and neighbourhood.

At three o'clock the Rev. J. E. Philipps, the Vicar of Warminster, ascended a temporary dais, and invoked the blessing of God on their undertaking, and afterwards the hymn "Praise the Lord," was sung, the entire audience joining in the praise.

Lord H. Thynne, who was greeted with hearty cheers, then delivered a brief inaugural address. He said that he had very great pleasure in being present that day, and he could not help thinking that the duties expected to be discharged by a member of Parliament were very various and extensive. He was expected to give his attention to politics, to matters of general interest affecting the country, to everything of local importance, and as on the present occasion, to works of art and industry. As a resident in that neighbourhood, he felt gratified at what he had seen, and believed that all present must feel some considerable pride in the exhibition which he had attended that day to inaugurate. He was sure they must all feel a deep interest in the undertaking, from the fact that it was the first exhibition of the kind that had been held in Warminster, as the centre of a wide district of parishes, each most closely allied with it. They must also feel great satisfaction at the liberal support which had been extended to the exhibition by the large meeting assembled that day. (Hear, hear.) At a time like the present, when the country was advancing in so many ways; and when one great subject of interest, not only in that county, but all over England, was the educational question - and especially to those who thought with him, that a national rate for such a purpose ought not to be levied until voluntary efforts had been found to fail - it was a great pleasure to him, and to them, to find that education should thus be fostered by encouraging and leading people to see the great advantages which education would bring to them. (Applause.) An education such as was afforded in that room could not fail to have a great effect for good. (Hear, hear.) He hoped the exhibition would be the means of doing good to the exhibitors themselves; and he hoped, also, that by the unity of all classes, by the gathering together of friend and neighbour, the exhibitor would not only be liberally rewarded for his work, but that others would be brought to see what intelligence added to industry could produce. He sincerely trusted that the exhibition would prove a benefit to the town and neighbourhood. (Applause.)

Mr. Ravenhill, who was well received, next addressed the meeting. He said that he had been requested by the gentlemen who had made the arrangements for the day to offer few observations. The fact of their being present was sufficient to prove the interest which they all felt in the objects which had brought them together, and he should, therefore, have very little to say on that matter. They had the happiness of knowing that the Anglo-Saxon race was one of the most energetic upon the face of the earth, and it was their indomitable, persevering, and never-slackening energy that had served to make England what she then was. (Applause.) When he looked round and saw the improvements which were taking place in that town and neighbourhood, he could not help feeling that they were keeping pace with the times. Therefore, they had a right to expect that the proposal of Mr. Philipps and the work of those who acted with him should be accepted by the people at large; and that there should be exhibited a very considerable number of very valuable articles, the product, in many cases, of the brains and the hands of the labouring classes. (Applause.) The subject of education had been alluded to. He was of opinion that the first point in education was to get people to think; and the next and the most valuable point was to get them to think aright. He believed that nothing was more likely to produce that result than such exhibitions as that now before them; and, looking to it as the first of a series, he thought he might venture to prophecy that very good fruits would spring from it. He should not detain them any longer; but he could not, in conclusion, refrain from observing that they all must remember that while they were laying their plans they must look for the increase to a higher power :-

In human works, though laboured on with pain,
A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;
In God's, one single can its end produce;
Yet seems to second, too, some other use.

(Applause.) He could assure them that he heartily hoped that that was the inauguration of a meeting which would be most productive of all that good which every one present must heartily desire. (Loud applause.)

Colonel Everett said he had been requested by Mr. Philipps to address them; but he must say that he did so quite against his will, for he really did not quite know what he was expected to say. However, the Vicar had laid his commands upon him, and like a good soldier he was bound to obey. It appeared to him that the principle of the exhibition was to encourage the industry of those of their poorer friends in the different parishes who had a chance of putting themselves forward by making such things as their talent enabled them to produce. He

believed that the exhibition was calculated to do much good, and he trusted that it would prove a success. (Applause.)

The Rev. J. E. Philipps, whose re-appearance on the dais was greeted with loud applause, said that as chairman of the sub-committee of the Warminster Industrial Exhibition, he wished to say one word as to what the exhibition was and what it was not. It was not a bazaar; it was not a mere shop; it was really an industrial exhibition. (Loud cheers.) It would have been very easy to have borrowed an exhibition; to have gone to their friends and neighbours and borrowed things that would have made a very interesting and a very beautiful display. But they thought they had better confine it to works of personal industry; and they had done so, for with the exception of one table and its contents, all which they saw around them - and he felt a pride in it - was the work of men and women in the town of Warminster, in Heytesbury, and the surrounding villages. (Much applause.) Lord Henry Thynne had said that that was the first exhibition of the kind ever held in Warminster: it was the first exhibition of the kind ever held in the county of Wilts. (Cheers.) He hoped that it would not be the last in Warminster. He hoped it was only the first of a series of such exhibitions, because he believed that they tended much to promote the education of the people and to give them self-respect. His worthy schoolmaster, who had always taken a lively interest in the education of the poor, said, when first the exhibition was talked of, that he believed it would do more to forward the education of the people than anything else he knew of; for it would not only employ their leisure profitably, but it would give opportunities for bringing genius to light, and would afford a strong incentive to the acquisition of knowledge. (Applause.) They would see there a great variety of articles; they would see there, he thought, that their carpenters and joiners could vie with those of Tunbridge Wells. They would see tables and other miniature articles of furniture beautifully made, and inlaid in a manner equal to those made at that noted place; they would see a walking stick made out of a cabbage-stump - (laughter) - and that was more than they could see every day. There were quilts displaying an amount of patience and perseverance that was most praiseworthy, and such as they must all envy. They saw also a nautical turn of mind exhibited in several nicely-executed models. There was harness that would not disgrace the back of any horse, but would rather put a higher price upon it. In fact, the articles of excellence and beauty, as they had seen, were too numerous to mention, and were co-extensive with the exhibition. He hoped the next exhibition they had would be superior to this. He trusted, however, that he might say without boasting that there was some slight merit in that the first Warminster Industrial Exhibition. (Applause.) He hoped their kind friends there on that occasion, and those from the town and district who would attend, would not rest satisfied with coming there that day, but would come there during the week to encourage their poorer neighbours by the purchase of those useful and beautiful articles which had been produced by so much labour and application on their part. He thought the man must be very dull and slow, to use no more forcible terms, who could witness that exhibition and not find something to instruct and please him, and to give him some new ideas. (Loud applause.)

Lord Henry Thynne then said - Nothing now remains for me to say but that I declare this exhibition open. (Cheers.)

This announcement was speedily conveyed to the band (the 1st Wilts Volunteers) outside, who completed the inauguration by playing the National Anthem, and during the remainder of the evening they rendered a capital selection of music.

The exhibition had been open during the week, and has been well attended the receipts up to Thursday night being £75. The amount of the entire expenses was under £80, so that the proceeds of Friday and Saturday will be money in hand for any purpose which the committee may determine.

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