

I am forwarding a copy of your letter to my Government by the outgoing mail, together with a number of copies of the pamphlet just issued, and I feel sure they will take whatever steps may be best calculated to secure the co-operation of all classes in the colony in the establishment of the Imperial Institute.

Sir Francis Knollys, K.C.M.G., C.B., &c.

I have, &c.,

F. D. BELL.

Enclosure 3 in No. 39.

[Extract from the *Times*, Thursday, 20th January, 1887.]

THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTE.

SIR,—

19th January.

Notwithstanding the full statement of the objects of the Imperial Institute by the Prince of Wales at St. James's Palace, the subsequent speeches at the Mansion House (for one of which I am responsible), and the report of the committee appointed by His Royal Highness, the public mind does not appear to have attained that condition of enlightenment as to the aim and purpose of the Institute which is desirable. In the course of the last few days I have been repeatedly questioned respecting the intentions of the propounders of the scheme, and somewhat closely catechized as to what I meant by my own speech.

With respect to the first inquiry, I found an easy refuge in the plea of absolute ignorance, except in so far as the means of forming a judgment which are open to all the world have been accessible to me. In regard to the second question, I could, of course, give a more satisfactory answer; at any rate, I knew what I meant to say, however much physical inability to address a large audience properly, and some other difficulties, may have interfered with my power of making my meaning clear to my auditory.

Unauthoritative as these notions of mine may be, I feel responsible to the public for having given utterance to them, and I shall be greatly obliged if you can afford me so much space as may suffice to remove any ambiguity that may cling to them.

It may help to clear the ground if I begin by saying what I did not mean. I had no intention of expressing any enthusiasm on behalf of the establishment of a vast permanent bazaar. I am not competent to estimate the real utility of these great shows. What I do see very clearly is that they involve difficulties of site, huge working expenses, the potentiality of endless squabbles, and, apparently, the cheapening of the honour of knighthood.

Neither had I any intention of advocating the adoption of the South Kensington site, proposed in the report. In fact, there was nothing officially before the meeting in regard to that matter, and the resolutions which were passed commit nobody to it. The arguments used in its favour in the report would be conclusive if the dry light of reason were the sole guide of human action. But I have never had a doubt that the selection of this position for the Institute would thoroughly alienate a number of powerful and wealthy bodies which are, or ought to be, connected with industry, and which, under other circumstances, might have proved the mainstay of the Institute. Those who are as well acquainted as I am with the history of the "Central Institution" of the City and Guilds Technical Institute, which looks so portly outside, and is so very much starved inside, will be able to estimate the warmth of the affection which the city is likely to entertain for a new birth at South Kensington.

That with which I did intend to express my strong sympathy was the intention, which I thought I discerned, to establish something which should play the same part in regard to the advancement of industrial knowledge which has been played in regard to science and learning in general, in these realms, by the Royal Society and the Universities.

I do not presume to say that such a plan is demonstrably contained in the documents before the public. Perhaps I have only read it into them; but whether it is there, or is only a dream of mine, it is the idea I had in my mind while I was speaking at the Mansion House.

I pictured the Imperial Institute to myself as a house of call for all those who are concerned in the advancement of industry; as a place in which the home-keeping industrial could find out all he wants to know about colonial industry, and the colonist about home industry; as a sort of neutral ground in which the capitalist and the artizan would be equally welcome; as a centre of intercommunication in which they might enter into friendly discussion of the problems at issue between them, and, perchance, arrive at a friendly solution of them. I imagined it a place in which the fullest stores of industrial knowledge would be made accessible to the public; in which the higher questions of commerce and industry would be systematically studied and elucidated; and where, as in an industrial University, the whole technical education of the country might find its centre and crown.

If I earnestly desire to see such an institution created it is not because I think that or anything else will put an end to pauperism and want—as somebody has absurdly suggested—but because I believe it will supply a foundation for that scientific organization of our industries which the changed conditions of the times render indispensable to their prosperity.

I do not think I am far wrong in assuming that we are entering, indeed, have already entered, upon the most serious struggle for existence to which this country has ever been committed. The latter years of the century promise to see us embarked in an industrial war of far more serious import than the military wars of its opening years. On the East, the most systematically-instructed and best-informed people in Europe are our competitors; on the West, an energetic offshoot of our own stock, grown bigger than its parent, enters upon the struggle possessed of natural resources to which we can make no pretension, and with every prospect of soon possessing that cheap labour by which they may be effectually utilized.

Many circumstances tend to justify the hope that we may hold our own if we are careful to "organize victory;" but, to those who reflect seriously on the prospects of the population of