

possible, in the neighbourhood. This may mean a radical change in the method of entering into contracts, and it certainly will entail a more direct responsibility on Government; but it will transform into sturdy settlers, with a stake in the country, a large proportion of those who, seeing no prospect here, are ready to embark for other lands. With a view to immediate relief, and stopping the exodus, we propose to put in hand such public works as are of a reproductive character and for which moneys are available.

Some facts in
connection with
the London poor.

Our first duty as legislators, it appears to me, is to see that it is made easier for the people to have comfortable homes. A great aggregate of wealth may be built up in the hands of a comparatively few, while the many may be pauperised; but this is not civilisation, and it is not a sign of health in the State. In the "Financial Reform Almanack" for 1891 we have the following appalling statement of facts: "In London one person in every five will die in the workhouse, hospital, or lunatic asylum. In 1888, out of 79,009 deaths in London, 41,505 being over twenty, 10,170 were in workhouses, 7,113 in hospitals, and 380 in lunatic asylums, or altogether 17,663 in public institutions. Moreover, the percentage is increasing. In 1887 it was 20·6 of the total deaths; in 1888 it rose to 23·3. The increase was exclusively in the deaths in workhouses and infirmaries. Considering that comparatively few of the deaths are those of children, it is probable that one in every four London adults will be driven into these refuges to die, and the proportion in the case of the 'manual-labour class' must of course be still larger. The number of persons who die whilst in receipt of out-door relief is not included in this calculation. The number of pauper funerals is not given in the official returns, but it is computed to be at least one-third of the total number of deaths, and that in spite of millions of insurances in burial clubs and industrial insurance societies."

Conclusion.

And this is the civilisation of the most civilised and the wealthiest city of the world. Well may we question the economic and social system of which this is the product! Should we not seek to establish our civilisation in this new land on a broader basis, in a deeper sympathy for humanity? Nor need we fear that in pursuing this aim we shall fail to reap that material prosperity of which Financial Statements aim at being the embodiment. The wide diffusion of wealth and industry among the people is the surest guarantee of a buoyant revenue and a healthy exchequer. I see only the closest relationship between a people well placed and fully employed, and a State enjoying the highest credit and discharging every obligation, moral and legal, imposed upon it. In urging these considerations, we are reminded of the maxim, which I believe to be the essence of all sound financial and social economy, that the safety of the people is the highest law, and demands the first consideration of the State.

I have, Sir, to return my sincere thanks to honourable members for their attention.