

**THE INTERNATIONAL
HEALTH EXHIBITION, ITS
INFLUENCE AND POSSIBLE
SEQUELS**

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The International health exhibition, its influence and possible sequels by Ernest Hart

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HEALTH EXHIBITION:

ITS INFLUENCE AND POSSIBLE SEQUELS.

BY

ERNEST HART,

CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL HEALTH SOCIETY, AND OF THE SMOKE ABATEMENT INSTITUTE; AND MEMBER OF
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH EXHIBITION.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY OF ARTS, NOVEMBER 26, 1884.

THE DUKE OF ROCKINGHAM AND CHANDOS, G.C.S.I., IN THE CHAIR.



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THE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH EXHIBITION: ITS INFLUENCE AND POSSIBLE SEQUELS.

BY ERNEST HART.

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In undertaking, at the request of the Council of the Society of Arts, to deliver at very short notice an address on the subject of the International Health Exhibition, I am influenced far less by any sense of personal fitness for undertaking a duty which would certainly be better filled by many of the eminent persons connected with that important and successful enterprise, than by a desire to carry out the wishes of the authorities of a Society which has from the first so largely aided in the successful development of the work of the Exhibition, and in the completeness of some of the most important of its executive details, and on which there may possibly devolve important duties in connection with the more permanent memorials which that undertaking may be expected to leave behind it. The members of the Society of Arts will inherit from the International Health Exhibition one legacy at least, upon which, indeed, they have already entered, which will constitute one of the most lasting memorials of the Exhibition, and one which is destined to exercise a far reaching influence in the furtherance of popular knowledge on health subjects and the encouragement of further progress. I refer to the twenty solid volumes of handbooks, lectures, conferences, and

catalogues which constitute the literature of the Exhibition. In their subject-matter they are of unsurpassed excellence, and the more they are studied, the more they will be appreciated.

Health exhibitions belong altogether to quite modern history, as, indeed, it is inevitable that they should, seeing that the science and art of sanitation, as we now study it, is of altogether modern origin, and may be said to be of chiefly English growth. Putting aside any attempt to review the history of health exhibitions in this country, I may say that I believe that the earliest attempts in that direction may be justly set down to the credit of the Social Science Association, which has, during many years, held local exhibitions of the kind in connection with its annual meetings. This association held its first exhibition in connection with its annual congress in Leeds, in 1871, followed by exhibitions in Norwich in 1873; Glasgow, 1874; Brighton, 1875; Liverpool, 1876. The Sanitary Institute held its first exhibition in 1879, and has since continued them in various great cities. The Parkes Museum, established in 1876, has since continuously developed the valuable collection formed in memory of eminent man whose name it bears.

successfully endeavoured, from year to year, to make this institution of increasing use by a series of lectures and meetings, which should attract to the museum persons interested, or whom it was desired to interest, in public health questions. These conferences afford an opportunity for diffusing information and for obtaining and communicating exact information on subjects relating to the public health. An exhibition of sanitary appliances, and of medical and surgical instruments related thereto, was successfully arranged by the authorities of the Parkes Museum at South Kensington in the year of the Medical Congress, 1881. So far as I know, however, the first health exhibition held in this metropolis, in the sense in which that word has been understood on this occasion, viz., health in its relation to the habitation, food, and dress, was organised by a sister society, the National Health Society, in 1883, in a large iron building at Knightsbridge, since known as Humphrey's hall. A special exhibition, with the object of promoting the Abatement of Smoke, was held at South Kensington in the year 1881, by the Smoke Abatement Committee, and had a valuable influence on public opinion, and in stimulating the ingenuity of inventors in a direction in which improvement is much needed.

The present Exhibition was organised under circumstances of some difficulty, owing to the great pressure of time, and the difficulties which the short space of time at command interposed in the way of making the display as fully international and representative as might have been desired. My first communications with Sir Philip Cunliffe-Owen on this subject were made early in July of last year, and I have before me a very complete programme, closely corresponding to that of the present Exhibition, which, with his approval, and the valuable assistance of Mr. Redgrave, was then drawn up, after an examination of the classifications, lists, and catalogues belonging to all previous exhibitions of the kind in this and other countries. At that time, however, there was reason to believe that the buildings of the International Fisheries Exhibition would be occupied by a display of another kind, and the preliminary steps then taken, therefore, fell into abeyance. In October of 1883 (at the close of the Fisheries Exhibition) his Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, announced his intention of organising a Health Exhibition in the buildings which had been the seat of the successful Fisheries Exhibition of 1883, in the following terms:—

"I have expressed a desire that the Exhibition of 1884 will embrace the conditions of health, in so far as, like food, clothes, and dwellings, they fall under the head of hygiene, or, like appliances for general and technical teaching, gymnasia and schools, under that of education."

These comprehensive words correspond closely and singularly with the definition which the late Dr. Parkes gave of the word hygiene:—"Hygiene signifies perfect rules for mind and body; it is impossible to disassociate the two."

The Saxon word "health" was chosen in planning the Exhibition, in lieu of the new scientific word "hygiene," for reasons which need no explanation, as being at once English and popular; on the other hand, the use of a phrase so popular, and to which a special domestic meaning has long attached, has made it easy for the numerous critics who are always at hand to correct us in our phraseology and in our acts, to achieve a superficial triumph in reviewing the numerous departments of the Exhibition by asking—"What has this or that particular exhibit to do with health?" The answer was, of course, easier than they chose to assume. Had the more technical and scientifically applicable word of hygiene been adopted, it would perhaps not have been so easy to the most captious critic to ask what have food or dress, or any element of the construction or fittings of the dwelling, to do with hygiene; for just as sanitation is a modern science, so is hygiene a modern word, which most briefly summarises the scope of modern sanitary endeavour. A Health Exhibition it was, in so far as health may be accepted as the synonym of "hygiene."

I shall not fatigue you by a recapitulation of the departments, or an analysis of the classification. The heads under which the various exhibits were shown may be summarised as food, dress, the dwelling, its construction, and fittings; water supply and sanitation, heating, lighting, and ventilation; the ambulance, the workshop, the school, and technical education.

The programme of the International Health Exhibition was properly, and even necessarily, so wide, that to attempt to deal with any considerable proportion of it in detail, in the short space of time to which a paper such as this is rightly limited, would reduce the character of any observations which could be made to that of a mere synopsis which would

have much of the character of a catalogue, and would therefore be foreign to the objects we set before us in a meeting such as this. I think that I shall be making the most useful employment open to me of the time at command this evening, if I limit our consideration to-night, of the Exhibition which has just closed, to a small and selected number of topics, among those—and they are many in number—which the Exhibition seems to me to suggest in respect to the consideration of its past usefulness. Especially also I wish to refer to the useful sequences which may practically result from it in various directions, by the active impressions which it made upon a number of the scattered organisations in this country possessing health functions, and upon the great body of the people, to whom we must look for support in the departments of sanitary progress which the Exhibition revealed to us as being in most pressing need of practical development.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES.

Before passing, however, to consider those particular features in the Exhibition from which, it seems to me, its useful influences have resulted, and will in the future flow, I think you will agree with me that it is not unfitting that I should give some idea of the nature of the organisation by which so great a result was effected, and of the work done in the different departments. I shall neither affect nor attempt to give this in complete detail. The Official Report which the Duke of Buckingham, the Chairman of the Executive Council, is engaged in preparing, and will shortly present to his Royal Highness the President, will no doubt set out, with accuracy and completeness, the chief facts connected with the working of the organisation over which his Grace has presided with such indefatigable assiduity, comprehensive knowledge, and singular attention to business detail.

You will, I am sure, however, think it right that I should remind you that immediately on their appointment, the Executive Council lost no time in organising a series of sub-committees and divisional sub-committees—seventeen in number, and including persons best known for their thorough information in each of the classes represented in the Exhibition. These sub-committees drew up a series of memoranda for the guidance of exhibitors, which are in themselves highly interesting and valuable documents, and will continue

to have a permanent value for the guidance of all who may undertake a similar enterprise in the future. These memoranda are to be found prefixed to all the editions of the catalogue, and tend to make that catalogue what it will long continue to be, an almost indispensable work of reference to whoever would have at hand a classified list of the objects which at the present time illustrate in the best manner our most advanced knowledge of applied sanitation in all its departments. The Executive Council met continuously, at least twice a week, for a long series of months, and with the invaluable aid of the sub-committees, and of the well-trained, able, and zealous executive staff placed at their disposal, they succeeded, in a short space of time, in making all the necessary arrangements.

FOREIGN CONTRIBUTIONS.

With foreign countries it was difficult, within the limited space of time at disposal, to make the necessary communications, and to convey the information they required, in order to induce them to take an active part in the Exhibition. In this object also an unexpected success was attained. Distant countries, such as China, were communicated with by telegraph, and—thanks, in a great measure, to the singular energy and goodwill of Sir Robert Hart, Mr. Campbell, and the Chinese Commissioners of Customs, and to the courageous initiative of Sir Philip Cunliffe-Owen—China undertook and carried out an exhibit of unique interest, in respect to a practical display of its food resources and culinary peculiarities, as well as of much that was picturesque, if not of scientific moment, in relation to the dwellings and the clothing of that most interesting nation. Thanks also to the active intelligence and courtesy of the Japanese Minister, Mr. Mori, the Japanese Government became, at a somewhat late date, warmly interested in the objects of the Exhibition, and they furnished a display of quite unsurpassed interest both in all that relates to scientific sanitation, in which this remarkable nation has made astonishing progress, and in respect to the illustration of the dwelling, clothing, and domestic arrangements of the people, as well as to the development of decorative art in its relation to the house. The Japanese Commissioners, Mr. Nagai, Mr. Tegima, and Mr. Murai, were, from the moment of their arrival in this country, quite indefatigable, and singularly successful in their endeavours to make the unique display which the Japanese Govern-