

**"ON THE ADOPTION OF THE PUBLIC  
LIBRARIES AND NEWS ROOMS ACT,  
1855, FOR THE CITY OF LONDON": A  
PAPER READ AT THE SOCIAL SCIENCE  
CONGRESS, BEFORE THE RIGHT HON.  
HENRY LORD BROUGHAM, F.R.S.**

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"On the Adoption of the Public Libraries and News Rooms Act, 1855, for the City of London": A paper read at the social science congress, before the right hon. Henry lord Brougham, F.R.S. by Matthew Henry Feilde

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**MATTHEW HENRY FEILDE**

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## Dedicated

TO THE

RT. HON. WILLIAM LAWRENCE, LORD MAYOR.

MY LORD,

I dedicate this 'Paper' to you,—a paper which I am proud to state elicited the "earnest and hearty approval" of Lord Brougham,—with peculiar pleasure.

It is a source of much satisfaction that so conspicuous a citizen as the Sheriff of London and Middlesex encouraged me to persevere in removing the lasting reproach that "the greatest city in the world is destitute of a public library."

You, my Lord, well know that whatever tends to EDUCATE or Instruct the people, tends, in an inverse ratio, to the decrease of pauperism and crime, and that FOUR News Rooms in the poorer quarters of the City, with Lending Libraries attached, *freely open to all comers*, would operate as 'Homes of Refuge,' and *counter* attractions to the public house.

You, my Lord, clearly perceive that this movement is eminently an *economic* one, to keep the *rates down*, and *not* to increase, or send them up, as the enemies of progress so pertinaciously declare.

My Lord, I am glad to know that you make Education a primary object of your care.

I indulge the hope that the tumultuous waves of opposition to this great scheme of Instruction are subsiding; and that the thick mists of prejudice are gradually dispersing.

With every sentiment of respect,

I have the honour to remain,

My Lord,

Yours faithfully,

MATTHEW HENRY FEILDE.

24, QUEEN'S ROAD, W.

January 30th, 1864.

*Rev. J. Milnes*

ON THE ADOPTION OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES  
AND NEWS ROOMS ACT, 1855, FOR THE  
CITY OF LONDON."

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A PAPER

READ AT THE

SOCIAL SCIENCE CONGRESS,

BEFORE THE

RIGHT HON. HENRY LORD BROUGHAM, F.R.S.,

BY

MATTHEW HENRY FEILDE, ESQ.,

PROMOTER OF MR. EWART'S ACT, AND ORIGINATOR OF  
WORKING MEN'S CLUBS.

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"I cannot leave this Court without expressing my earnest and hearty approval of the Paper read by Mr. FEILDE. I have listened to his arguments in support of News Rooms and Lending Libraries for the City of London with very great pleasure."

LOED BROUGHAM.

"It is a great Educational movement to improve the condition of the Poor, and to rescue the mass of the people from Ignorance."

"I have opened up a new and wide field for the diffusion of political knowledge, and the instruction of the People."—*Preface.*

WITH REMARKS

ON THE

SOUTHERN INDEPENDENCE QUESTION.

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## P R E F A C E .

—So changed since youth,  
I've learn'd to think, and sternly speak the truth;  
Learn'd to deride the "liner's" cruds decree,  
And break him on the wheel he meant for me.

THE following Paper is submitted to the consideration of all persons rated to the Consolidated Rate in the City of London. It was read at the Social Science Congress, Guildhall, June 10, 1862, before the Right Hon. Lord Brougham, and was received with manifest approbation by the noble President.

It is particularly addressed to plain COMMON SENSE people—to citizens endowed with good *practical*, rather than fine or exalted, sense. It makes a strong appeal to the ratepayers to vote for a Scheme of Instruction which has three distinct objects in view: 1st, The diffusion, or spread of sound political and social knowledge; 2nd, The dissemination of science and art education; 3rd, The reduction of poor rates, by raising from an impoverished to a better condition persons in the lower grades of life, sunk in ignorance and degradation.

My paper was put down for reading in the Social Economy Court. Why, or for what reason, it was capriciously excluded from the second department, EDUCATION, is a mystery I cannot solve. This oversight leads me to remark that whoever has the arrangement of the papers is as obnoxious to criticism as the "hanging committee" of the Royal Academy. Why was my paper described with such inaccuracy and meagreness?—"M. *Fielde* (for *Feilde*): A Library for the City of London." It was no such thing. It was, "On the adoption of the Public Libraries and News Rooms Act, 1835, for the CITY OF LONDON." The Congress was sitting in the very heart of the City—in the Guildhall—and certainly no other paper was discussed that so peculiarly deserved to be honourably mentioned, or which possessed a title of the interest attaching to mine. Yet, out of the twelve that were read, my paper was set down the eleventh on the list. It is really too bad that feeble essays on "Amusements," and "Flower Shows" should have had the precedence of a paper so intimately connected with the welfare of the City of London, and which obtained the warm approval of the venerable President. It is not my wish to dispute "the rare ability of Miss Isa Craig," nor can I feel surprised that a lady should exhibit a feminine preference for what is transitory and sensational to what is more beneficial and enduring. Still, I must demur to the fairness of detaining my paper for upwards of six months, when only a few words appeared in



the "Transactions, 1863," viz.: "Mr. M. Feilde read a Paper recommending the adoption of the Public Libraries and News Rooms Act, 1855, 18 and 19 Vic., cap. 70, for the City of London, and expressed his regret that that Act was merely permissive." Before I leave this point I cannot resist quoting from a letter from my kind friend, Robert Heywood, Esq., J.P. :—

"Bolton, December 17.

"Dear Sir,

"I have received your very powerful appeal to the rate-payers of the Parish of Kensington in favour of Mr. Ewart's Act. I believe the Public Libraries and News Rooms Act, 1855, to be the most judicious legislative measure ever passed, and I trust you will prove successful, and thereby cheered on in your truly praiseworthy course. I am greatly surprised to learn that the Social Science people decline to publish your paper on this important subject, still more after the promise made to you at the Meeting."

As a friendly critic let me suggest to the Secretary of the Congress that any thing that wears the semblance of partiality, or favouritism, should be carefully eschewed. Why was Mr. J. C. Buckmaster's 'paper' honoured by a prominent position in the EDUCATION COURT, while mine was so ignominiously treated? The paper read by Mr. Buckmaster was a *richouffage*, i.e. dressing up in a new style his stereotyped lecture on the nature and conditions on which the Science and Art Department at South Kensington aid Science Instruction. Why will Mr. Buckmaster persist in ignoring Mr. Ewart's *Museums and Schools for Science and Art Act*? Why this whining for "State aid?" Why persist in ignoring the 18th clause of the Public Libraries Act, by which suitable buildings may be purchased for "Public Libraries, or Museums, or for Schools for Science and Art?" This itinerant philosopher ought to know that you cannot teach Science, you can only give a taste for it. Nor should this veteran agitator so pertinaciously conceal this truth, that although Mr. Ewart's humanising Act is described as "*the Public Libraries Act, 1855*," it is *just as much a Museum's Act, or News Rooms Act, or Schools for Science or Art Act*. The 21st section of the Act provides for "the safety and use of the Libraries, News Rooms, and Museums, and for the admission of the Public." Let me inform Mr. Buckmaster that **LEADING LIBRARIES and NEWS ROOMS, and NOT Museums, or Schools for Science or Art are THE wants of the age.** Let me remind him, any *suppressio veri* of this simple reality approaches very nearly to a positive *suggestio falsi*. If any special manufacture is carried on in a town, and a Museum or School of Art is required, adopt Mr. Ewart's Act. But I "once again" must repeat that *News Rooms*, open to all comers, and *Leading Libraries* are the great *desiderata* of the day. The aim and object of Mr. Buckmaster's iterations, and iterations, seems to be to obtain Government assistance in a very objectionable manner. Government interference with private enterprise is not desirable. If a Museum, or Art School, is a need, let the ratepayers adopt the Libraries Act. By taxing themselves to the trivial amount of one penny in the pound, they can establish Museums and Schools of Art, in a far better way than in seeking State aid.

The town of Burslem, in which the Chancellor of the Exchequer recently delivered his incomparable Oration, has led the way. The peculiarity in the case of Burslem is that it is the first application of the Libraries Act to the formation of a *School of Art* in combination with a Library and Museum. In short, that it is the first application of a rate

*to purposes of Art Education.* No doubt other Schools of Art will be formed in manufacturing towns, after the good example of Burslem, a town in which my uncle, the late Rev. Edward Feilde, M.A., was Curate, and to whom a very handsome testimonial was presented. I cannot resist briefly alluding to the chief feature of the plan which I hope the citizens of London will unanimously adopt, *i.e.* four News Rooms in the poorer quarters of the City. The Rate-supported Free News Room, OPEN TO ALL COMERS! would be a 'HOME OF REFUGE' for the waifs and strays of the turbid sea of this Great Metropolis! With lavatories and refreshment rooms annexed, the Free News Room, with Newspapers from all parts of the world, would soon prove a powerful COUNTER ATTRACTION to the public house. Four News Rooms fringing the City boundaries, the abodes of destitution and misery, would work wonders in exorcising and laying two of the most implacable enemies to which the lower ranks are exposed, IGNORANCE and INEBRIETY. The vice of Drunkenness is begotten by Ignorance, and would be very considerably checked by the simple apparatus of comfortable well furnished News Rooms, set up avowedly to compete with, and to counteract the evils of the gin palace. Next to the preaching of the Gospel I know of no agency so effectual in humanizing and improving the habits of the lower orders, as FREE NEWS ROOMS AND LENDING LIBRARIES. The Bishop of London recently stated that "he had counted forty two public houses in one street in Old Brentford, and expressed a hope the three churches in that town would be able to keep the forty-two public houses in order." I contend such church-work as this can only be performed by NEWS ROOMS under Mr. Ewart's Act. I will not say the Clergy have not that sympathy with those of low degree which they ought to have, but who will venture to affirm that they reach the classes whose melioration and culture I am especially advocating? The formidable enemy, IGNORANCE, is too strong for the individual exertions of the Clergy. You can only dislodge, or weaken this mighty power by putting in force the co-operative, or associative principle. It is proposed, after the first year, to ask *one halfpenny in the pound on the Consolidated Rate.* Remember the Act states "the amount of the rate shall not exceed one penny in the pound in any one year." Well, *nil desperandum* is my motto. I do not despair. *Gradatim vincimus.* I hope, even against hope, that the burghesses of the first City in the world will AWAKE, and perceive that it is better—far better to give their money for News Rooms and Lending Libraries rather than for prisons,—for books and papers, rather than for the support of paupers. The News Rooms Act stands out conspicuously as the most practical measure for the INSTRUCTION OF THE PEOPLE. I rejoice to notice the tide of opinion, so long adverse, is turning, and a strong current is setting in in favour of the adoption of this wise Act for the City of London.

— "Si quid novisti rectius istis,  
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum."

Hon.

"If you know any better scheme, candidly impart it, but if not, make use of mine." No doubt in the City there are men who decline to take their share in any movement of Progress, however practical or however praiseworthy. Such obstructives are mostly of the Old School, and, I fear, are beyond the reach of argument. They are inaccessible to the ordinary weapons of morality and logic. They are immersed in the pursuit of wealth; and MONEY is literally the god of their idolatry.

Speak to them of the duty of going to war with Ignorance, or redressing its evils—of the sound policy of educating the people,

———"So that none,  
 However destitute, be left to droop  
 By timely culture unstained; or run  
 Into a wild disorder; or be forced  
 To drudge through weary life without the aid  
 Of intellectual implements and tools;"

and the probability is that you will be met with a derisive smile, or a hurricane of unjust censure and rude reproach. This measure of four Free Public News Rooms in the City is eminently a *practical one*, and is obviously calculated to do good. Yet the propounder meets with as much virulent opposition from certain enemies of progress, as if he were promulgating a crime of the deepest dye, or devising some evil of more than ordinary magnitude. That weak and flickering, and certainly not very bright, or shining light, the Deputy of the Ward of *Candlewick* is determined his glimmering shall not be hid under a bushel. Mr. Elliott, in mournful and affected Jeremiads, can groan over "the besetting sin of the Corporation of London." With a keen glance at St Thomas's day, the Candlewick deputy can "probe the wrong doings" of his municipal brethren, and deliver jejune, *ad captandum* lectures against "extravagance."

"Like Niobe, all tears;"—HAMLET, Act I.

He mourns over the degeneracy of "rich communities." Yet not one ray of light does this blinking taper emit on the darkness of ignorance, and the mists of error! Not one syllable of indignation escapes Mr. Deputy Elliott's lips that London lags far behind provincial towns. Not one word of remonstrance against the richest city in the world being destitute of a Free Public News Room and Library. Mr. Elliott is quick enough to discern small, insignificant offences in Members of the Court of Common Council—he can flog away at petty corruption, but can perceive no wrong in opposing with bitter acrimony the *only practical means* for the spread of knowledge! The greatest social movement of the day is treated by this, and *certain other sturdy* opponents of progress, [would be "wise men," who seem to say, "I am the Corporation," and "when I speak, let no dog bark;"] in the Court of Common Council, with the utmost scorn and contempt. The Candlewick deputy, and certain other Civic Magnates, who dread the light of intelligence, and would debar the poor from sitting down to the intellectual feast which Mr. Ewart has provided, see no grievance, feel no remorse in withholding the invaluable blessing of EDUCATION. The injustice of keeping the rising generation in fearful ignorance is never dreamed of in their philosophy! Messrs. Elliott, Taylor and Co. would NEVER open the temple of knowledge.

The cause of popular instruction by means of FREE NEWS ROOMS and LIBRARIES is stubbornly opposed by certain champions of Ignorance in the Common Council, who are of opinion that such admirable institutions would be *extremely injurious!* To show his sympathy for that clerical mountebank, H. W. Beecher, Mr. B. Scott, a well-paid servant of the Corporation, can demean himself by taking the Chair at a Party Meeting. Like his transatlantic and most irreverend friend, Mr. Scott is a first-class fanatic and teetotaler. He deems it prudent and becoming in a Chairman to deliver a most intemperate philippic, and thinks *it consistent* with his duty as City Chamberlain, to contemptuously sneer