

10 SOUTH STREET, PARK LANE

Feb. 7, 1891

DEAR SIR

Sir Douglas Galton has given me your most kind message; saying that if I will explain in writing to you what I think needs doing, you will be so good as to give it the experienced attention without which it would be worthless. By your kind leave, it is this A scheme from someone of high authority as to what should be the work and subjects in teaching Social Physics and their practical application in the event of our being able to obtain a Statistical Professorship or Readership at the University of Oxford. I am not thinking so much of Hygiene and Sanitary work, because these and their statistics have been more closely studied in England than probably any other branch of statistics, though much remains to be desired: as e.g. the result of the food and cooking of the poor as seen in the children of the Infant Schools and those of somewhat higher ages. But I would subject always to your criticism and only for the sake of illustration mention a few of the other branches in which we appear hardly to know anything, e.g. A. The results of Forster's Act, now 20 years old. We sweep annually into our Elementary Schools hundreds of thousands of children, spending millions of money. Do we know: (i) What proportion of children forget their whole education after leaving school; whether all they have been taught is waste? The almost accidental statistics of Guards' recruits would point to a large proportion.

(ii) What are the results upon the lives and conduct of children in after life who don't forget all they have been taught? (iii) What are the methods and what are the results, for example in Night Schools and Secondary Schools, in preventing primary education from being a waste? If we know not what are the effects upon our national life of Forster's Act is not this a strange gap in reasonable England's knowledge? B (1). The results of legal punishments i.e. the deterrent or encouraging effects upon crime of being in gaol. Some excellent and hardworking reformers tell us: Whatever you do keep a boy out of gaol work the First Offenders' Act once in gaol, always in gaol gaol is the cradle of crime. Other equally zealous and active reformers say a boy must be in gaol once at least to learn its hardships before he can be rescued. Is it again not strange in practical England that we know no more about this? (2). Is the career of a criminal from big first committal and for what action to his last, whether (a) to the gallows, or (b) to rehabilitation, recorded? It is stated by trustworthy persons that no such statistics exist, and that we can only learn the criminal's career from himself in friendly confidence what it has been from being in gaol, say for stealing a turnip for a boys' feast, or for breaking his schoolroom window in a temper because he has been turned out of school for making a

noise to murder or to morality. In how many cases must all our legislation be experiment, not experience! Any experience must be thrown away. B (3). What effect has education on crime? (a) Some people answer unhesitatingly : As education increases crime decreases; (b) Others as unhesitatingly: Education only teaches to escape conviction, or to steal better when released. (c) Others again : Education has nothing to do with it either way. C. We spend millions in rates in putting people into Workhouses, and millions in charity in taking them out. What is the proportion of names which from generation to generation appear the same in Workhouse records? What is the proportion of children de pauperised or pauperised by the Workhouse? Does the large Union School, or the small, or 'boarding out' return more pauper children to honest independent life? On girls what is the result of the training of the large Union Schools in fitting them for honest little domestic places and what proportion of them falling into vice have to return to the Workhouse? Upon all such subjects how should the use of statistics be taught? D. India with its 250 millions 200 millions being our fellow subjects, I suppose enters so little into practical English public life that many scarcely know where this small country is. It forms scarcely an element in our calculations, though we have piles of Indian statistics. [As to India the problems are:] (i) Whether the peoples there are growing richer or poorer, better or worse fed and clothed? (ii) Whether their physical powers are deteriorating or not? (iii) Whether fever not only kills less or more, but whether it incapacitates from labour for fewer or more months in the year? (iv) What are the native manufactures and productions, needed by the greatest customer in the world, the Government of India, which could be had as good and cheap in India, as those to be had from England? (v) Whether the native trades and handicrafts are being ruined or being encouraged under our rule? (vi) What is the result of Sir C. Wood's (1853) Education Act in India? These are only a very few of the Indian things which I will not say are hotly contested, for few care either in the House of Commons or out, but have their opposites asserted with equal positiveness. I have no time to make my letter any shorter, although these are but a very few instances. What is wanted is that so high an authority as Mr Francis Galton should jot down other great branches upon which he would wish for statistics, and for some teaching how to use these statistics in order to legislate for and to administer our national life with more precision and experience. One authority was consulted and he answered : "That we have statistics and that Govern ment must do it." Surely the answering question is : The Government does not use the statistics which it has in administering and legislating except indeed to "deal damnation" across the floor of the H. of C. at the Opposition and vice versd. Why? Because though the great majority of Cabinet Ministers, of the Army, of the Executive, of both Houses of Parliament have received a university education, what has that university education taught them of the practical application of statistics? Many of the Government Offices have splendid statistics. What use do they make of them? One of the last words Dr Farr of the General Register Office said to me was: "Yes, you must get an Oxford Professorship; don't let it drop." M. Quetelet. gave me his *Physique Sociale* and his *Anthropometrie*. He said almost like Sir Isaac Newton: "These

are only a few pebbles picked up on the vast seashore of the ocean to be explored. Let the explorations be carried out." You know how Quetelet reduced the most apparently accidental carelessness to ever recurring facts, so that as long as the same conditions exist, the same "accidents" will recur with absolutely unfailing regularity'. You remember what Quetelet wrote and Sir J. Herschel enforced the advice" Put down what you expect from such and such legislation; after years, see where it has given you what you expected, and where it has failed. But you change your laws and your administering of them so fast, and without inquiry after results past or present, that it is all experiment, see saw, doctrinaire, a shuttlecock between two battledores." Might I ask from your kindness if not deterred by this long scrawl for your answer in writing as to heads of subjects for the scheme? Then to give me some little time, and that you would then make an appointment some afternoon, as you kindly proposed, to talk it over, to teach, and to advise me? Pray believe me,

Yours most faithfully,

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE