ATLAS PRIZE ESSAY.

NATIONAL DISTRESS;

ITS CAUSES AND REMEDIES.

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LONDON:

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.; AND WHITTAKER AND CO.

ALSO,

AT THE ATLAS OFFICE, 6, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.

1844.

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PREFACE.

When the following Essay was submitted to the public, some months ago, in the columns of the Atlas newspaper, in accordance with the conditions prescribed by the offer of the Prize, I felt myself under the necessity of requesting the favourable attention of the reader to the circumstance that, owing to the unavoidable delay that had taken place in the adjudication of the prizes, that which had been written during the months of October and November, 1842, was appearing for the first time, after a lapse of nearly a year and a half, under a completely altered state of circumstances. The same request is even more necessary now, when the work appears in a separate form, after a further lapse of time, every day of which has fortunately tended to remove, to a still greater distance from us, the state of things under the influence of which the following chapters were composed. It is impossible that an Essay, written during a period of severe commercial depression and universal distress, and with the express view, by the conditions of the competition, of pointing out, and suggesting remedies for, the pressing evils under which society was then labouring, should not, under the present altered state of circumstances, appear

to convey a somewhat gloomy and exaggerated picture of the condition of the country. I am quite aware that, in publishing the work as it was originally written, I lay myself open to this imputation, and also that upon many of the questions under consideration, the facts quoted and arguments adduced may appear somewhat obsolete and out of date. At the same time, however, I feel that to recast what I had written in a manner satisfactory to myself, so as to meet the present altered state of things, and to embrace the information which has been accumulated, and the questions which have risen into importance since 1842, would require an amount of time and labour which, amidst the pressure of other engagements, it is utterly impossible for me to bestow. By far the greater portion of the work, also, relates to questions of permanent interest, which are not much affected by the alternations of hot and cold fits of commercial depression and excitement, to which the country has been, for many years past, periodically subject; and the requisite deductions and allowances will, for the most part, readily suggest themselves to the intelligent reader. He will bear in mind, that the estimates of the amount of pauperism and destitution, and of the condition of the labouring, and more especially of the manufacturing population, are all intended to be drawn with reference, not to a favourable, or even to an average, state of things, but as a picture of the condition to which the country was reduced towards the end of a crisis of unexampled severity and duration. He will bear in mind, also, that as the improvement which has taken place is evidently attributable, in a great degree, to fortuitous and temporary causes, such as the state of the money-market, the re-opening of the trade with China,

and, in a far greater degree than all others, to the happy accident of a succession of favourable harvests, producing a cheap and steady supply of the principal necessaries of life,—it would be unreasonable to overlook the probability that a change may again ensue, or to conclude that the evils which appeared of such startling magnitude in 1842, are extirpated, because they are, to a certain extent, removed from view.

While I make these observations in order to guard myself against the imputation of having, intentionally, coloured the picture of English society of a darker hue than a sober and dispassionate judgment might approve of, looking from an altered part of view, and under a different state of circumstances, I do not wish to be understood as desirous of retracting or modifying any of the general views and conclusions at which I have arrived in the following pages. On the contrary, every day's reflection and experience confirm my conviction in what may be called the fundamental positions and principles of the "Condition of England" problem. Upon the secondary questions of the financial, commercial, and various other economical and legislative remedies, that might be applied with advantage, I am not aware of having written anything which I should wish to modify; but I freely admit, that my convictions upon these matters are of a very inferior degree of certainty to those which I feel in regard to the moral bearings of the question, and I submit them, accordingly, with diffidence, and subject to correction.

The reader who accompanies me through the pages of the following Essay, will not fail to perceive that its fundamental view is to recognise the predominance of moral

causes, even in those branches of inquiry which have generally been regarded as exclusively within the domain of political and economical science, and its principal object to endeavour, by a selection of authentic facts, to throw light upon the manner in which the performance or neglect of moral obligation on the part of individuals, and the presence or absence of a high standard of public opinion and moral feeling among the different classes of the community, have operated practically in bringing about important social results.

It is mainly by the hope that the investigations into which I have been thus led, may be of some use at a period like the present, when the national mind is fast awakening to a sense of dangers which had been overlooked, and responsibilities which had been forgotten, that I am now induced to bring before the public a work, of the imperfections of which, as any thing like a complete and elaborate treatise upon a subject of such wide extent and overwhelming importance, I am thoroughly conscious.

London,
June 25th, 1844.

ATLAS PRIZE ESSAY,

ON

THE CAUSES OF, AND REMEDIES FOR,

THE EXISTING DISTRESS OF THE COUNTRY.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS—ABSENCE OF THE USUAL HISTORICAL SYMPTOMS OF NATIONAL DECLINE—DEFINITION OF THE EVILS WHICH THREATEN SOCIETY.

THE first step towards an inquiry into the causes and remedies of existing distress must be to define, with some tolerable approach to accuracy, the nature and symptoms of the disease whose origin we wish to trace, and for which we would endeavour to prescribe. This is the more necessary when the disease is of a different nature from those to which we have been accustomed, and appears rather to resemble one of the deep-seated organic maladies which the frame of society, like that of the individual, developes at certain critical periods of growth and transition, than one of the ordinary and obvious complaints whose treatment has been already brought within the domain of recognised rules. At former periods of history we have heard complaints of national distress, and witnessed instances of national decay; but these have been occasioned by causes, and accompanied by symptoms, very different from those which characterize the present phase of social existence in England. For instance, invasion of foreign enemies, loss of national independence, decay of energy and martial spirit, domestic discord, religious persecution, financial embarrassment, sudden changes in the accustomed course of commerce, are all recognised causes and

symptoms of the decline of nations. Of none of these do we find a trace in the present condition of England.

On the contrary, never, perhaps, was there a period when national prosperity, judged of by these outward historical tests, stood higher. England stands without dispute the first naval and commercial power in the world. Ships and money, the two great elements of superiority in modern warfare, she commands to an almost unlimited extent, and by the application of steam her relative superiority over other nations is daily increasing. Strong as she is in her resources, she is still stronger in the vigour and energy of her national character. The recent events in Syria, China, Affghanistan, and Scinde, whatever we may think of their policy, have had at least this advantage—they have shown in the most signal manner that twenty-seven years of peace have not impaired the martial energy and cool resolute valour which have carried the English flag in triumph through so many bloody contests, from Crecy and Agincourt, to Trafalgar and Waterloo. Fortunately, however, at no period of her history was there ever less prospect of a struggle which should again call forth the energies of England in defence of her national rights or independence. The adjustment of our differences with the United States, the triumphant conclusion of the wars in Affghanistan and China, and the return to a good understanding with France, have placed the foreign relations of the British empire on a footing the most secure and satisfactory.

Nor can it be said with any truth that the domestic symptoms usually enumerated as the precursors of national decay, are apparent in the present social condition of the British empire. Party spirit no doubt prevails, but scarcely to a dangerous extent. There is no line of demarcation which, as in countries less fortunately situated, separates society into hostile camps, arrayed under different political or religious banners. On the contrary, public opinion has led to the extinction of the last vestiges of religious exclusion, and political prejudices seldom interfere with the courtesies and kindly relations of social life. Notwithstanding the excitement of party contests, perhaps there have been few periods in English history when the differences between leading statesmen were more entirely nominal, and when measures, clearly seen to be necessary for the public welfare, were more certain to receive the united support of the most intelligent and influential men of all shades of political opinion.*

The state of Ireland is, by the conditions of this Essay, excluded from our consideration, or else it might not be difficult to show

* This was written in 1842. Undoubtedly the approximation between moderate Whig and moderate Conservative has been since then occasionally interrupted, but it is still true that the distinctions of party in England are only skin-deep, and do not endanger the existence, or embitter the intercourse, of society.

that the political, as distinguished from the agrarian agitation of that unhappy country, is to a great extent of our own making, and would probably, in a great measure, disappear, if we could make up our minds to the slight sacrifice of lingering prejudice, implied in admitting our Catholic fellow-subjects to a full, frank, and unreserved equality of political privilege.

The state of our vast colonial empire appears also to afford no ground for urgent apprehension. The seeds of political discontent, sown long ago in Canada by the injudicious attempt to graft a fac-simile of the British constitution on the old seigneurial institutions of feudal France, have been, in a great measure, eradicated, by the vigorous and judicious measure of uniting the two provinces. The successful issue of Lord Ashburton's negotiations with the government of the United States has removed the only threatening source of danger from without; and on the whole there appears every reason to hope that by following up the principles of colonial policy established by Lord John Russell and Lord Sydenham, and by acting with common judgment in the selection of men of talent and integrity for the important office of governor, we may ensure a long career of prosperity for our North American dominions. The decided measure taken by Sir C. Bagot, of admitting the representatives of the French population to a share in the administration, is a continuation of the same policy, which may be summed up as that of governing in accordance with the wishes and wants of a majority in the colony, and not for the exclusive benefit of a little pseudo-aristocratic clique or family compact. Many years ago Sir J. Kempt recommended Papineau, then a talented young barrister at Montreal, for a judgeship: that recommendation was disregarded by the colonial secretary of the day, because it was contrary to all precedent to appoint a man of French descent, and not a member of the family compact, to an official situation. In that act originated the Canadian insurrection. At the expense of a million of money, and the imminent risk of losing our North American colonies, we have at length learned a little common sense. The same remark will apply to our other colonial possessions. In the West Indies, the success of the great experiment of emancipation has not only removed the stigma of slavery from the British name, but has placed our connexion with those magnificent possessions on a solid and secure basis. Instead of 800,000 dissolute and discontented slaves, we have 800,000 civilised Christian subjects, bound to the mother country by ties of gratitude and interest, and advancing rapidly in the scale of intelligence and material prosperity. The diminished profits of a few planters and merchants, more than half of whom are absentees, are a trifling set-off against the advantages which, even in a political and commercial point of view, have resulted from the noble act of obedience to

duty which prompted the people of England to strike the fetters from the slave.* The abolition of the East India Company's monopoly, and the adoption of a more liberal commercial policy, have, within the last few years, done wonders in calling forth the dormant energies and resources of our vast Indian empire. Already a supply of 60,000 tons of sugar is brought from a country which, before the year 1836, did not export a single pound; and there seems scarcely any limit to the extension of the cultivation of sugar, coffee, cotton, and other staple articles, by the introduction and example of English capital and enterprise. The enactment of a reasonable code of regulation for colonial commerce (by the bill introduced by Mr. Labouchere in 1841, and again brought forward by Mr. Gladstone, and passed into a law, in the course of last session), has done more than a series of successful wars for the consolidation of our colonial empire. Restrictions, partial and vexatious monopolies in favour of particular colonies, are swept away, and the British colonies now enjoy perfect free trade with the mother country and with one another; and also with all foreign countries, subject to a slight differential duty of 7 per cent, imposed as a fair equivalent for the expense incurred by England in affording government and military defence. It is not too much to say that, had this act been in existence, the United States, whose original causes of discontent were entirely commercial,† might, and in all probability would, at this day, have formed a loyal and contented portion of the British dominions. To the vast colonies, which are fast filling the southern hemisphere with an English population, we will only allude, the rather as it will be necessary, in a later part of this Essay, to enter in more detail on the subject of emigration. In the meantime, it is enough to say, that with a few fluctuations, arising from over-trading and speculation, our Australian settlements, including Van Dieman's Land and the newly-founded colony of New Zealand, present a picture of progress unparalleled in the annals of colonial history.‡

If then, as we have seen reason to believe, the political relations of England at home, abroad, and in the colonies, exhibit no symptom of declining vigour, still less can it be said that her

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* Declared value of exports of British produce and manufactures to the British West Indies—

YEARS OF SLAVERY.		YEARS OF FREEDOM.	
1830	£2,838,448	1838	£3,393,441
1831	2,581,949	1839	3,986,598
1832	2,439,808	1840	3,574,970

† Franklin's Memoirs show, in the clearest and most instructive manner, how feelings of *political* discontent were gradually *forced* in the colonies, by the systematic sacrifice of their *commercial* rights and *material* interests.

‡ Declared value of exports of British produce and manufactures to the Australian settlements:—1830, 314,677*l.*; 1835, 696,345*l.*; 1840, 2,004,385*l.*

financial resources are impaired, her credit exhausted, or that she shows any of the usual signs of an alarming diminution in the aggregate of national wealth. It is true that for the last three or four years we have struggled with some slight degree of financial embarrassment, and seen the revenue fall below the current expenditure. This, however, is clearly attributable to certain specific causes, and not to general decay. The produce of the revenue has fallen off, not because old taxes have become unproductive, but because an enormous amount of taxation has been taken off. Between 1815 and 1830 taxes to the amount of 30,000,000*l.* annually were repealed, while the produce of taxation was only reduced by 20,000,000*l.** Between 1830 and 1837 further taxes, to the amount of upwards of 7,000,000*l.* annually were taken off; and, finally, in 1839, a sacrifice of another million of revenue was made, in order to afford the country the boon of the penny postage.

The effect of these reductions since 1830 has been, in round numbers, to bring down the produce of the revenue from 51,000,000*l.* to 47,500,000*l.*, or to diminish revenue by not quite half the reduction in taxation; a result which, although when coupled with the additional expenditure rendered necessary by negro emancipation, by the insurrection in Canada, by the wars in China and Affghanistan, and by the state of our political relations with France and in the Levant, was quite enough to involve the country in temporary embarrassment, is widely different from those symptoms of deep-rooted exhaustion which, as in the case of the Roman empire and old French monarchy, result from and indicate the impending bankruptcy of worn-out and corrupt societies.

The state of public credit indicated by the price of the funds is a sure test that in the opinion of those most qualified to form a correct judgment on the subject, the resources of the country are as yet unimpaired. Indeed, with the Three per Cents at 99, it appears almost ludicrous to talk seriously of financial embarrassments. In fact, the national burdens of England, enormous as they appear, are great only in themselves, and not when viewed, as they always ought to be, *relatively* to the still more enormous wealth and resources of the nation.

The national income has been estimated at an average of from 16*l.* to 17*l.* per head per annum. This would give a total gross income of about 297,000,000*l.*† Macculloch says, "We believe

* See Porter's Progress of the Nation, sec. iv., chap. 3.

† The amount of income actually assessed to the property-tax in 1814—15, amounted to 166,222,128*l.*, exclusive of all incomes below 50*l.* a year. The returns of Sir R. Peel's property-tax show that in 1842 the income of the country, exclusive of incomes below 150*l*, exceeded 180,000,000*l.*

we shall not be far wrong if we estimate the gross national income at from 290,000,000*l.* to 310,000,000*l.*"*

The national debt being about 760,000,000*l.*, is, therefore little more than two years' purchase of the national income; and the annual interest upon it, amounting to 29,000,000*l.*, constitutes a charge of only 8 or 9 per cent. upon this income. The whole amount of taxation, taking it at 50,000,000*l.*, does not exceed 15 per cent on the national income; a burden which, although large, is far from overwhelming, or out of proportion to those borne by other countries.

The amount of national capital upon which the above income is based cannot be estimated with any approach to accuracy, but it is truly enormous. The rental of land alone, at the very moderate average of 17*s.* an acre for land under cultivation, is estimated at 32,000,000*l.*, and this estimate is confirmed by the returns in 1815 under the property-tax.† This, at the current market price of land, would give upwards of 900,000,000*l.* for the capital of the single class of landowners. Some idea of the extent of personal property may be formed from the fact that the average amount of capital which pays legacy duty in each year exceeds 40,000,000*l.*

A few facts, selected almost at hazard from the official tables, will be sufficient, with those already stated, to place beyond the possibility of question all that is required for our present purpose—viz., that the sum total of national wealth is enormous, and that the evils with which we have to contend are not the result of national poverty, in the simple sense of the word.

In the course of little more than six years 1700 miles of railway have been completed at a cost of 54,000,000*l.*‡

The aggregate length of highway roads in England and Wales amounted, in 1839, to 104,772 miles.§

The length of navigable canals in England is estimated to exceed 2200 miles.‖

The number of inhabited houses in Great Britain is 593,911, being 172,504 more than in 1831, and nearly double the number in 1821.

The value of British produce and manufactures annually ex-

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* Macculloch's Statistics of British Empire. Other statistical writers have estimated the national income at a much higher amount, but the data are quite uncertain. We may, however, pronounce with confidence that the total annual income of the nation is now not below 350,000,000*l.*, of which upwards of 200,000,000*l.* is composed of incomes above 100*l.* a year.

† Macculloch's Statistics of British Empire, vol. i., p. 535.

‡ Report of Railway Department, 1842.

§ Parliamentary Tables. ‖ Porter's Progress of the Nation.

ported has risen in the course of the last fifteen years, from about 35,000,000*l.* to upwards of 50,000,000*l.**

The gross receipts from customs' duties on imports exceed 23,000,000*l.*, of which tea contributes three millions and a half; tobacco, three millions and a half; wine, two millions; and sugar, five millions. The quantities of these articles consumed in the year 1840, respectively, were—tea, 35,127,000 lbs.; tobacco, 22,779,000 lbs.; wine, 7,000,000 gallons; sugar, 3,825,000 cwt.

In the same year 39,814,000 bushels of malt, and 25,190,000 gallons of British spirits, paid duty.

On the 1st of January, 1841, the number of vessels belonging to the United Kingdom amounted to 21,983, and their tonnage to 2,724,107.† In the preceding year 17,635 British vessels, carrying 3,101,650 tons, entered inwards at the several ports of the United Kingdom from foreign parts, and 17,066 vessels, carrying 3,096,611 tons, cleared outwards.

Since the year 1820 upwards of 60,000,000*l.* of British capital has been invested in foreign loans, foreign mining companies, and other joint-stock adventures of a speculative character; and at the present time capital is so superabundant, that it seeks in vain for investment at a rate of interest scarcely exceeding 3 per cent. on good security.‡

It would be easy to accumulate facts of a similar nature, but those above cited are sufficient for our present purpose, which is simply to show that the country exhibits, as yet, no decided symptom of declining wealth, and that whatever may be the evils which afflict society, the want of a sufficient capital to set industry in motion, and to sustain the national burdens is certainly not among them.

Where, then, is the distress? If neither the political circumstances, the financial condition, nor—considered with reference only to the amount of wealth—the economical state of the country, show any indications of decay or danger, how is it that so

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* Declared value of British produce and manufactures exported in the years ending 5th January—

1840	£53,233,580
1841	51,406,430
1842	51,634,623

In 1820 the amount was only 36,126,322*l.*; and in 1830, 37,927,561*l.*

† In 1830 the number of ships was 19,174, and the tonnage 2,201,592. The increase in ten years has been about 500,000 tons, and 100,000 tons of steam shipping.

‡ The Canada loan bearing interest at 3½ per cent., was taken at the extraordinarily high rate of 109 per cent., a fact which, of itself, sufficiently demonstrates the superfluity of capital and the difficulty of finding an investment. The Three per Cents have since risen to par, a higher quotation than was ever before known.

many serious men shake their heads with gloomy apprehensions, and at times feel tempted to doubt whether the amount of evil in the present social condition of England does not preponderate over the good? *It is in the condition of the labouring classes that the danger lies.* Amidst the intoxication of wealth and progress, and the dreams of a millenium of material prosperity to be realized by the inventions of science, the discoveries of political economy, and the unrestricted application of man's energy and intelligence to outward objects, society has been startled by a discovery of the fearful fact, that as wealth increases, poverty increases in a faster ratio, and that in almost exact proportion to the advance of one portion of society in opulence, intelligence, and civilisation, has been the retrogression of another and more numerous class towards misery, degradation, and barbarism.

To speak more specifically, the leading facts to which the evils that, in one shape or other, are continually forcing themselves upon the attention of society, may be reduced, appear to be—

1st. The existence of an intolerable mass of *misery*, including in the term both recognised and official pauperism, and the unrecognised destitution that preys, like a consuming ulcer, in the heart of our large cities and densely-peopled manufacturing districts.

2dly. The condition of a large proportion of the independent labouring class, who are unable to secure a tolerably comfortable and stable existence in return for their labour, and are approximating, there is too much reason to fear, towards the gulf of pauperism, in which they will be, sooner or later, swallowed up, unless something effectual can be done to arrest their downward progress.

The researches of various Parliamentary committees and commissions, as well as those of philanthropic societies and individuals, during the last few years, have accumulated a vast mass of evidence bearing upon this all-important subject, from which we shall endeavour to select a few portions sufficient to satisfy our readers of the *actual existence*, and of the extent and nature, of these evils.

CHAPTER II.

OFFICIAL PAUPERISM AND UNRECOGNISED DESTITUTION.—EVIDENCE RESPECTING THE CONDITION OF THE LOWER CLASSES IN LARGE TOWNS.

THE existing amount of official pauperism is given as follows by the Poor-law Commissioners :—

Population in 1831.	Number of Paupers relieved in 577 Unions, included under the New Poor-law at Lady-day, 1843.			Per centage of Pauperism to Population.
	In-door.	Out-door.	Total.	
11,462,109	159,118	913,860	1,072,978	9.4

Including the parishes not yet brought under the operation of the new law, the estimate of the Commissioners for England and Wales, is—number of paupers relieved, 1,300,928; per centage of pauperism to population in 1831, 9.5. Taking the population in 1841 at 15,911,725, as given by the late census, this gives an actual per centage of official pauperism to population, of 8¼ per cent., or nearly one person out of every twelve.

When we consider the rigorous administration of the New Poor-law, and the avowed determination of the Legislature and the Commissioners* to repress pauperism by attaching the most unpalatable conditions to relief, we may feel assured that the whole amount of pauperism represented by the official tables is *bonâ fide* destitution. Indeed, as regards the whole class of able-bodied labourers under sixty years of age, we may feel morally certain that hardly, in a single instance, has relief been granted until cruel privations had been undergone, or accepted, unless as an alternative for something approaching very nearly to actual starvation. The amount of destitution, therefore, represented by 1,300,928 persons, or one in twelve of the population, may be taken with confidence as a *minimum* from which to start in prosecuting future inquiries.

When we consider that this proportion far exceeds that of any of the other great civilised countries of Europe, with the exception, perhaps, of a few exclusively manufacturing districts in France and Belgium; and that the actual number of souls suffering the pangs of poverty is considerably greater than that of the whole population of *rich*, including in the term *all* who possess any description of realised property, or who enjoy an income which places them within the class commonly called *respectable*, the amount of pauperism disclosed by the official tables will, of

* Eighth Annual Report of Poor-law Commissioners, Appendix E, No. 1.

itself, appear most alarming.* The *official* misery, however, bears but a small proportion to that which actually exists. Indeed, it is only in the agricultural districts that it can be taken even as an approximation towards it. The misery of our large towns and manufacturing districts, by far the most extensive and appalling evil of modern society, eludes, by its very magnitude, the operation of all systems of legal charity which have hitherto been tried. To form an idea of it we must visit the scenes ourselves, and study the accounts of those who have seen with their own eyes, and who record the results of their own experience.

An enlightened and philanthropic foreign writer,† in describing the results of his personal observation in England, says, with equal force and truth, that by the side of an opulence, activity, elegance, and wide-spread comfort, of which the world has no example, every great city contains "a real *Ghetto*"—a cursed quarter—a hell upon earth, where the reality of *misery*, depravity, and every hideous form of human suffering and degradation surpasses any thing that the imagination of a Dante ever conceived in describing the abode of devils, and the torments of the damned.

Such a quarter is that described by Dr. Kay, in Manchester, which bears the significant name of "Little Ireland:"—

This district has been frequently the haunt of hordes of thieves and desperadoes, who defied the law, and is always inhabited by a class resembling savages in their appetites and habits. It is surrounded on every side by some of the largest factories of the town, whose chimneys vomit forth dense clouds of smoke, which hang heavily over this insalubrious region.

The following detailed description of a district in the heart of Glasgow, from personal observation, by a most intelligent inquirer, will convince our readers that no language can exaggerate the horrors of the scenes which are daily and hourly passing in the midst of the immense emporiums of wealth and commerce which have sprung up, as if by magic, throughout the land:—

The low districts of Glasgaw, consisting chiefly of the alleys leading out of the High-street, the lanes in the Calton—but particularly the closes and wynds which lie between the Trongate and Bridgegate, the Salt-market, and Maxwell-street, contain a motley population, consisting in almost all the lower branches of occupation, but chiefly of a community whose sole means of subsistence

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* The returns of the Income-tax, in 1812, showed in Great Britain—

127,000 persons with an income from	£ 50	to	200
22,000 ditto	200	to	1000
3,000 ditto	1000	to	5000
600 above	5000		

Total, 152,600 persons possessing incomes above 50*l.* a year, or, with their families, above 600,000 souls. The number of persons of independent fortune in Britain—that is, of persons who can live without any labour, is estimated at 47,000, and their families at 234,000.—*Alison on Population.*

† Eugene Buret, "La Misere des Classes Laborieuses." See, also, Leon Faucher's Account of St. Giles's, Whitechapel, &c., in the *Revue Française.*

consists in plunder and prostitution. Under the escort of that vigilant officer, Captain Miller, the superintendent of the Glasgow police, I have four times visited these districts—once in the morning, and three times at night; I have seen human degradation in some of its worst phases, both in England and abroad, but I can advisedly say, that I did not believe, until I visited the wynds of Glasgow, that so large an amount of filth, crime, misery, and disease, existed on one spot in any civilised country. The wynds consist of long lanes, so narrow that a cart could with difficulty pass along them; out of these open the "closes," which are courts about fifteen or twenty feet square, round which the houses, mostly of three stories high, are built; the centre of the court is the dunghill, which, probably, is the most lucrative part of the estate to the laird in most instances, and which it would, consequently, be esteemed an invasion of the rights of property to remove. (Again:)—In the lower lodging-houses, ten, twelve, and sometimes twenty persons, of both sexes and all ages, sleep promiscuously on the floor, in different degrees of nakedness. These places are generally, as regards dirt, damp, and decay, such as no person of common humanity to animals would stable his horse in.—*J. E. Symonds, Esq., Assistant Handloom Commissioners' Reports*, p. 51.

Captain Miller, superintendent of police, in his papers relative to the state of crime in Glasgow, states, respecting the same district:—

There is concentrated every thing that is wretched, dissolute, loathsome, and pestilential. These places are filled by a population of many thousands of miserable creatures.* The houses in which they live are unfit even for sties, and every apartment is filled with a promiscuous crowd of men, women, and children, all in the most revolting state of filth and squalor. In many houses there is scarcely any ventilation; dunghills lie in the vicinity of the dwellings; and from the extremely defective sewerage, filth of every kind constantly accumulates. In these horrid dens the most abandoned characters of the city are collected, and from thence they nightly issue to disseminate disease, and to pour upon the town every species of crime and abomination. In such receptacles, so long as they are permitted to remain, crime of every sort may be expected to abound, and unless the evil is speedily and vigorously checked, it must of necessity increase. The people who dwell in these quarters of the city are sunk to the lowest possible state of personal degradation, in whom no elevated idea can be expected to arise, and who regard themselves, from the hopelessness of their condition, as doomed to a life of wretchedness and crime. —pp. 14, 15.†

The sanitary condition of Glasgow affords sufficient proof that the above descriptions of the state to which a large proportion of its population is reduced are not exaggerated. The rate of mortality on the average of the five years 1836—40 was 1 in 31.918; the average rate in Great Britain being about 1 in 48, and in London 1 in 40. In one year (1837) the rate of mortality was as high as 1 in 24.634.‡ The number of individuals who have been attacked by typhus fever in Glasgow during the last five years (a disease which has been proved by the most distinguished medical inquirers to be the attendant and result of *misery* in large towns,)

* Mr. Symonds estimates the population of these wynds at 30,000—a number equal to that of the whole of the genteel population of the west end of London.—*Arts and Artisans*, by J. C. Symonds, Esq., p. 116.

† Reports on Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Classes, vol. ii., p. 72. See also Report on Glasgow, by C. Baird, Esq., p. 159.

‡ Sanitary Reports, vol. ii., p. 168; and Population Abstracts, 1831.

with its concomitants of filth, intoxication, and vice;* is computed to be as follows:—

In 1836	10,092
„ 1837	21,800
„ 1838	9,792
„ 1839	8,085
„ 1840	15,290
Total	62,051*

A result which, as the humane and intelligent writer observes, "the mind cannot contemplate without feeling horror at the amount of human misery which the above statement so forcibly exhibits."

The case of Glasgow, owing to particular circumstances—such as its extremely sudden growth,† the great influx both of Irish and Highlanders in a state of equal destitution,‡ and, above all, the total want of poor-laws, or any organised system of legal charity in Scotland,§ is probably the worst; but a perusal of the evidence collected respecting the condition of large masses of the labouring classes in Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and other manufacturing towns, and in Bethnal-green, Whitechapel, St. Giles's, and various districts of the metropolis, will show that the difference is one of *degree*, and not of kind, and that the description of the wynds of Glasgow will apply, with very little abatement, to whole quarters of our most wealthy and flourishing cities.

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* The *immediate* cause of the typhus fever which prevails so extensively in our large towns has been the subject of some difference of opinion among medical men. Drs. Arnot and Southwood Smith assigning the malaria resulting from filth, want of sewerage, and insufficient lodging, as the *primary*, and destitution as the *secondary* cause; while Drs. Alison, Cowan, and others, reverse the order, and consider destitution as a more certain and active cause of contagion than malaria. For *practical* purposes, however, the difference is, in a great measure, nominal, since filth and insufficient lodging always go hand-in-hand with destitution. The fact seems to be, that in each case the observers have assigned more prominence to the causes which favoured their own peculiar views. Dr. Alison, as a warm advocate of the introduction of poor-laws into Scotland, was anxious to show that unrelieved destitution led infallibly to disease; while Drs. Arnot and Smith, as advocates of the New Poor-law, had a bias against any thing that might seem to call for an extension of legal relief.

† Dr. Cowan's Vital Statistics of Glasgow, p. 17.

‡ The statistics of Glasgow afford a striking illustration of the truth of our position, that the evils which affect our social system are not the result of national poverty, but, on the contrary, have accompanied and grown out of the most extraordinary development of opulence, industrial progress, and commercial activity:—

Years.	Population of Glasgow.	Custom-house Duties.	Harbour Dues.
1770	31,000	£ —	£ 149
1801	83,769	3,124	3,319
1831	202,426	72,053	20,296
1839	260,000	468,974	45,287

—*Dr. Cleland's Statistics of Glasgow.*

§ See Report of Select Committee on Emigration (Scotland), 1841.

In Liverpool,* upwards of 35,000 cases of typhus fever have been treated in five years, giving an average of one in twenty-five of the working population annually effected with fever. It has been ascertained that there are upwards of 8,000 inhabited cellars, whose occupants are estimated at from 35,000 to 40,000. These cellars are "dwellings under ground, in many cases having no windows, and no communication with the external air, excepting by the door, the top of which is sometimes not higher than the level of the street. When the door of such a cellar is closed, therefore, light and air are both excluded. The access to the door is by a narrow flight of steps descending from the street; the roof is often so low as not to admit of a person of moderate height standing upright; and there is frequently no floor of any kind except the bare earth." On the occasion of a recent inquiry, by order of the town council, it was ascertained that out of 6,571 cellars examined, 2,988 were either wet or damp, and nearly a third of the whole number were from five to six feet below the level of the street.

The state of most of these cellars, and of the courts and alleys in which the greater part of the 175,000 individuals of the working classes in Liverpool are compelled to live,† is filthy beyond description. On a recent occasion it was ascertained that, in a district comprising about 2,500 houses, there were not less than 922 houses, and 1,843 cellars, without either yard, privy, ashpit, or receptacle for filth of any description. Dr. Duncan mentions one instance of a cellar, in which nearly thirty individuals slept every night, where a kind of well had been dug in the floor for receiving the offal and filth of the household. This hole, situated in the front cellar or sitting apartment, not only filled that with its effluvia, but they were carried by the draught from the door directly into the back cellar where most of the inmates slept, and which had no communication with the external air. Fever of a malignant type broke out amongst these unfortunate beings, and in the course of a week or two carried off seven or eight of their number.

It is almost too painful to pursue the hideous and revolting details of human misery and degradation which meet the inquirer at every step; and it is difficult to speak of them with the calmness which impartial inquiry demands, and which is necessary in order to avoid the appearance of exaggeration. And yet it is an *imperative* duty; for the upper classes of society have only too long shut their eyes to the *realities* by which they are surrounded, and lived on in a dream of selfish pursuits and enjoyments, utterly unconscious of the manner in which millions of human

* Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 282.

† Dr. Duncan estimates that *nearly one-half* of the working classes in Liverpool inhabit courts, and from 35,000 to 40,000 live in cellars.—*Sanitary Reports*, p. 284.

beings, fashioned in every respect as themselves, and distinguished from them only by the *accidents* of an artificial system of civilisation, were living and dying around them. We proceed, therefore, in our melancholy inquiry. The following description of a lodging-house will give an idea of the receptacles into which large masses of the poorer population of our great cities, without distinction of sex or age, are nightly huddled:—

In a lodging-house in Shaw Hill-street, twenty-three cases of fever occurred in six months; but the cellar of that house was used as a receptacle for manure, and sent up into the rooms above a stench which it was almost impossible to bear. It is not an uncommon practice with the keepers of lodging-cellars to cover the floor with straw, and allow as many human beings as can manage to pack themselves together to take up their quarters for the night, at the charge of a penny each; and I was told of a lodging-house keeper in Johnston-street, who was said to receive 16*s.* a night from his lodgers, paying an average charge of about 3*d.* each.*

In the town of Manchester† alone, the number of lodging-houses, in 1838, amounted to 267. The following graphic account of Dr. Howard may give an idea of the scenes which are presented in those places:—

The crowded state of the beds, filled promiscuously with men, women, and children, the floor covered over with the filthy and ragged clothing they have just put off, and with their various bundles and packages, containing all the property they possess, mark the depraved and blunted state of their feelings, and the moral and social disorder that exists. The suffocating stench and heat of the atmosphere are intolerable to a person coming from the open air. Even if the place be inspected during the day, the state of things is not much better. Several persons will very commonly be found in bed: one is probably sick, a second is perhaps sleeping away the effects of the previous night's debauch, whilst another is possibly dozing away his time because he has no employment, or is taking his rest now because he obtains his living by some nightwork. In consequence of this occupation of the room during the day, the windows are kept constantly closed, ventilation is entirely neglected, and the vitiated atmosphere is ever ready to communicate its influence to the first fresh comer.‡

We must not imagine that these abominations are confined to a limited extent. On the contrary, the *magnitude* of the evil, as attested by statistical facts, is no less frightful than its intensity. The result of an inquiry undertaken by the "Special Board of Health," formed in Manchester, in 1832, when the alarm of the cholera *forced*, for the first time, the attention of the upper classes to the condition of the poor, gives the following picture of the state of our first manufacturing towns:—

Of 687 streets inspected, 248 were reported unpaved, 53 partially paved, 112 ill-ventilated, and 352 containing heaps of refuse, stagnant pools, ordure, &c.

Of 6951 houses inspected, 2565 were reported as requiring white-washing, 960 requiring repair, 939 in which the soughs wanted repair, 1435 damp, 452 ill-ventilated, and 2221 were reported as wanting privies.§

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* Dr. Duncan's Report on Liverpool, Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 291.

† Sanitary Reports, vol. i., pp. 240, 294.

‡ Dr. Howard's Report on Manchester, Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 319.

§ Dr. Kay. Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes of Manchester.

The facts that in a single year, 1839, 42,964 persons (nearly one-sixth of the whole population) were admitted at different medical charities,* and that more than one-half of the inhabitants are either so destitute or so degraded as to require the assistance of public charity in bringing their offspring into the world,† afford a melancholy illustration of the condition of the working classes in Manchester.

In Leeds,‡ if a line be drawn through the centre of the town from north to south, the deaths, in proportion to the population on the east side of the line, in the half of the town inhabited principally by the poorer classes, were, in 1839, as 1 to every 24; while in those parts of the town where the streets are spacious and wide, and the drainage sufficient, the deaths were only as 1 to 36. Both ratios are high, the average mortality of England being only about 1 in 48; but the former is truly frightful, and indicates only too well that the following picture of the lower parts of Leeds, by an eye-witnes, is not overcharged: —

> Here are to be found houses occupied by tenants shadowed down through every grade, from the rents obtained on the first estate, to the 1*s.* a week rent of the dark and dank cellar, inhabited by Irish families, including pigs, with broken panes in every window-frame, and filth and vermin in every nook. Here, with the walls unwhitewashed for years, black with the smoke of foul chimneys, without water, with corded bedstocks for beds, and sacking for bedclothing, with floors unwashed from year to year, without out-offices, and with incomes of a few shillings a week, derived from the labour of half-starved children, or the more precarious earnings of casual employment, are to be found within, what seem the dregs of society, but are human beings withal, existing from hour to hour under every form of privation and distress.§

In Birmingham it is calculated that 49,016 persons reside in courts, which are described as for the most part "narrow, filthy, ill-ventilated, and badly drained." The police returns show 122 mendicants' lodging-houses, 252 Irish lodging-houses, and 314 inhabited by common prostitutes, besides 81 houses noted as used for the reception of stolen goods, and 228 described as the resort for thieves.‖

In Nottingham 8000 houses, out of about 11,000, of which the town is composed, are built back to back, with no other outlet than the street door, and are described "as generally too small to afford a comfortable reception to the family, so that the junior members are generally in the streets; and girls and youths, destitute of adequate house-room and freed from parental control, are accustomed to gross immoralities."¶

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* Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p 295.

† Dr. Kay. Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes of Manchester.

‡ Report on Leeds, by Robert Baker, Esq. Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 366.

§ R. Baker, Esq. Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 361.

‖ Report by a Committee of Physicians and Surgeons in Birmingham. Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 192.

¶ Mr. Barnett, Clerk of Nottingham Union. Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 155.

The reports on the state of the other large manufacturing towns and districts comprised in the inquiry, give a succession of similar details more or less aggravated according to local circumstances; but, on the whole, presenting everywhere the same melancholy result—viz., a highly increased rate of mortality and prevalence of fever and contagious diseases, ascribed by those practically acquainted with the condition of the people, to poverty, filth, want of decent habitations, intemperance, improvidence, excessive and infant labour, and, in many cases, want of the common necessaries of life.* Even in towns and districts which have no connexion with manufactures, the same evils are shown to exist, though in a less degree. For instance, in the fashionable watering-place of Brighton, there are districts which, for wretchedness and degradation, may dispute the palms with the wynds of Glasgow, or cellars of Liverpool.†

In Sunderland, a shipping and commercial port, we are told that "the town was found, when the cholera broke out, in a very deplorable state, both as to the wretchedness of the poor and the filthy condition of the streets and lanes. The dwellings were crowded, filthy, and bore every appearance of extreme want, and it was found that many people were existing on the lowest possible scale of nourishment, and clothing was deficient amongst them."‡

Of the populous and manufacturing districts of Scotland and its large cities, such as Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Paisley, Aberdeen, Inverness, &c., it may be said generally that the worst of the above descriptions will apply, with the addition of a degree of extreme destitution, resulting from the want of any proper system of legal relief, surpassing any thing of which we can form an idea in the most wretched part of England.§

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* See Report on the State of the Labouring Classes in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Staffordshire, by Charles Mott, Esq., Assistant Poor-law Commissioner; with Reports inclosed from the Medical Men and Officers of the different Districts. Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 232. Report on Lancashire, by A. Power, Esq., Assistant Poor-law Commissioner, ditto, p. 256. Reports on Leeds, Lancaster, Leicester, Nottingham, Wolverhampton, &c., ditto. See also Reports of Hand-loom Commission Inquiry, Factory Reports, Reports of Statistical Society of Manchester, &c. &c. The evidence is overwhelming, but I have preferred quoting from the Sanitary Reports for two reasons:—1st. That they are official and of the latest date. 2d. That being made under the superintendence of the Poor-law Commissioners, they are free from any suspicion of bias to *overstate* the existing evils.

† Dr. Jenks on the Sanitary State of the Town of Brighton. Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 57.

‡ Dr. Morley, Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 423.

§ See Sanitary Reports, vol. ii.; Alison on the Management of the Poor in Scotland; Symond's Report to Hand-loom Commissioners; Report of Committee of General Assembly on the Poor. These reports are full of instances of *families* whose total earnings do not exceed 3*s.* or 4*s.* a-week; and of wretched

Ireland is excluded from the present inquiry, or we should be compelled to go even yet a step lower in the scale of misery, and show a population of eight millions, among whom the extremest destitution of Scotland is not the exception, but the rule; a population whose condition cannot be more forcibly described than by the single fact that the *lumper*, a coarse and wet description of potato, has, of late years, almost entirely superseded the more wholesome and nutritious, but less productive, varieties of the plant, as the ordinary food of the peasantry and the working classes.*

In London, the vast metropolis whose wealth and commercial activity surpass any thing related in the history of the civilised world, a stranger, or even an inhabitant who had lived all his life in the West-end, and seen nothing but the great thoroughfares and districts inhabited by fashion and respectability, would be apt to conclude that scenes like those described in the Reports on Glasgow and Manchester, had no existence. A single glance at the Bills of Mortality is sufficient to dispel the illusion. In Whitechapel, with a population of 71,758, the average annual mortality is as 1 in 26, a ratio as high as that of the most unhealthy manufacturing town. The mean average mortality in the four districts of Whitechapel, Bethnal-green, St. Giles, St. George, Southwark, and Bermondsey, which contain together a population of 281,264 of the labouring, manufacturing, and poorer classes, is as high as 1 in 30, and in all these districts the typhus fever, the unerring sign of social misery and degradation, is firmly established, and makes periodical ravages only less destructive than those which decimate the poor of Liverpool and Glasgow.† The contrast between this rate of mortality and that of the *aristocratic* parish of St. George's, Hanover-square, which is only 1 in 51, and of the *respectable* districts of Marylebone and St. Pancras, which is only 1 in 49, affords a most instructive lesson, and will prepare us to receive the following statement, by a distinguished medical man, whose official duty led him to investigate closely the state of the labouring population in the

creatures whose *sole* visible means of support consist of a pittance of 2*s.* or 3*s.* a month, doled out by the Kirk Session, or some charitable fund. Scotch destitution has gone a step beyond English, and arrived, like that of Ireland, at a point at which all other evils are swallowed up in the urgent and ever-present danger of literal death from starvation.

* See Report of Irish Poor-law Commission; de Beaumont sur l'Irlande. The Irish Poor-law Inquiry establishes the fact, that nearly a third of the population of Ireland habitually suffer from want of food during the two or three summer months, when the old potato crop is exhausted, and the new one not ready.

† See Reports of Drs. Southwood Smith and Arnott, Appendix to Fourth Annual Report of Poor-law Commissioners. In two unions alone, Whitechapel and Bethnal-green, 4,641 cases of typhus fever have been treated by public charity in a single year.

eastern parts of the metropolis, as a simple unexaggerated picture of actual facts.

While systematic efforts on a large scale have been made to widen the streets, to remove obstructions to the circulation of free currents of air, to extend and perfect the drainage and sewerage, and to prevent the accumulation of putrifying vegetable and animal substances in the places where the wealthier classes reside, nothing whatever has been done to improve the condition of the districts inhabited by the poor. Those neglected places are out of view, and are not thought of; their condition is known only to the parish officers and the medical men whose duties oblige them to visit the inhabitants to relieve their necessities and to attend to their sick; and even these services are not performed without danger. Such is the filthy, close, and unwashed state of the houses, and the poisonous condition of the localities in which the greater part of the houses are situated, from the total want of drainage, and the masses of putrifying matters of all sorts which are allowed to remain and accumulate indefinitely, that during the last year (1839) in several of the parishes both relieving officers and medical men lost their lives, in consequence of the brief stay in those places which they were obliged to make in the performance of their duties. Yet in these pestilential places the poor are obliged to take up their abode: they have no choice. By no prudence or foresight can they avoid the dreadful evils of this class to which they are thus exposed. No returns can show the amount of suffering which they have had to endure from causes of this kind during the last year, but the present returns indicate some of the final results of that suffering; they show that out of 77,000 persons, 14,000—or one-fifth part of the whole—have been attacked with fever.—*Dr. Southwood Smith. Appendix to Fifth Poor-law Report.*

It may perhaps be said that scenes like those which have been described are the necessary attendants on civilisation, and have always existed, although now for the first time brought to light. It is no doubt true that in all ages, wealthy and luxurious capitals have had their outlawed quarters—the abodes of thieves and prostitutes—and that the progress of civilisation and opulence has a tendency to develope a certain amount of *vice*, which again, by an invariable law of nature, produces *misery*. The present situation of affairs in England presents, however, an amount of misery far too extensive to allow us to put it by, with the comfortable solution, that it is the natural and inevitable retribution of the misconduct of those who suffer. The difference seems to be, that whereas in other times and countries, *vice* was generally the cause and *misery* the effect; with us the case is reversed, and the criminality, sufferings, and moral degradation of the poorer classes are for the most part occasioned by the pressure of circumstances over which they have no control, and which have plunged a large portion of our population into a state which renders any thing approaching to decent and comfortable existence a moral impossibility.

This leads us to the second branch of our proposition;—viz., that the destitution of whose extreme condition we have endeavoured to trace a faithful picture, has already swallowed up a great mass of our labouring population, and is rapidly encroaching upon a still larger mass, who are approximating

more and more towards it, and whose condition is becoming every day more and more precarious. In short, that with the exception of a comparatively small number of skilled labourers and artizans, there is too much reason to fear that if the causes which have operated for the last fifty, and with increased force for the last fifteen or twenty years, be allowed to operate unchecked for a few years more, the great bulk of the labouring population of England will be reduced to a condition which leaves no alternative between a violent and bloody revolution, shattering the whole existing framework of society to pieces, or a permanent degradation of the population to a state of abject and heart-broken resignation to misery, which almost reduces the human being to a level with the brute.

We proceed to state some of the leading facts which have completely shaken our faith in the economical optimism which was so lately in vogue among our politicians and writers, and which have forced these conclusions reluctantly upon our mind.

CHAPTER III.

EXTENT OF DESTITUTION IN LARGE TOWNS, &c.—CONDITION OF HAND-LOOM WEAVERS AND OTHER CLASSES OF UNSKILLED MANUFACTURING OPERATIVES.

THE statements above quoted of the condition of our large cities and manufacturing towns are, of themselves, sufficient to show that the evil has already reached a formidable extent. In Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds, and the eastern parts of the metropolis, it is demonstrated that a large proportion, in many instances not less, perhaps, than *one-half*, of the common labouring population, are compelled to live under circumstances which necessarily imply an extreme degree of suffering and degradation. The results shown by sanitary facts, and tables of mortality, lead to the same conclusion, since it is evident that before the *average* result can be greatly affected, the influencing causes must exist on a large scale. Now, we have already seen that, comparing the average rate of mortality of a quarter of a million of the poorer and of the richer classes, living under the same circumstances of climate, &c., in the same city of London, the probability of life is *nearly double* where the depressing circumstances attendant on poverty are removed. In the agricultural districts of Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland, the average number of inhabitants out of every 1000 who arrive at the age of 70, is 204. In London it is only 104; in Birmingham, 81; in Leeds, 79; and in Liverpool and Manchester, 63.* In the metropolis and manufacturing districts the average mortality

* First Annual Report of Registrar-General, p. 23.

of children under five years of age is nearly double that in the healthy rural districts.* Taking an equal amount of town and country population, another return gives the total number of deaths in the same period as 22,994 to 14,473; and the number of deaths from contagious epidemics as 6,204 to 2,350.

These results are, unfortunately, only too easily explained, when we come to investigate the condition, resources, and manner of living of the town and manufacturing population. The following analysis of the population of Leeds, given by E. Baker, Esq., in the *Sanitary Reports*, will furnish instructive information as to the general state of society and composition of the population of a manufacturing town :—

Persons having sedentary occupations	1,586
Persons having perambulatory occupations	967
Professions	292
Merchants	427
Persons working in mines	130
General out-door labour and handicraft	3,988
In-door labour and handicraft	13,455
Dyers	665
In trade	2,799
Not in business	1,905
Persons under 15 years of age without occupations	31,056
Other persons without occupations	21,990
Persons employed in manufacture	8,363
Total	87,613†

This document shows one most remarkable fact—that in the great manufacturing town of Leeds considerably more than a *third of the whole adult population* have no regular occupation.‡ Imagine the condition of a poor family, in a large town, without regular employment. How do they exist? By occasional job-work, by sending their children to factories or into the streets to beg, by hawking petty articles for sale, by casual charity—especially of those who are only one degree better off than themselves. With such resources, can we wonder that no cellar or lodging-house is too unhealthy or disgusting to fail in finding nightly its

* Proportion of deaths under 5 years to 1000 registered deaths in 1839 :—Manchester, 555.4; Liverpool, 507.6; Leeds, 528.1; Lancashire, 458.5; West Riding of Yorkshire, 457.2; Lancashire (North of Morecombe Bay), Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Northumberland, 293.9.—*Population, &c. Tables*, 1841, p. 267.

† Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 371.

‡ Another remarkable result is the extremely small number of persons who are directly employed in manufactures, even in those towns which we are accustomed to consider as exclusively manufacturing. The same result appears from an analysis of the population of all the principal seats of manufacture. In Glasgow, with a population of 250,000, only 29,287 were directly, or indirectly, connected with the cotton manufacture, and in all the factories of every description, only 5,585 males were employed.—*Sanitary Reports*, vol. ii., p. 162.

twenty or thirty occupants? Can we wonder that pilfering and prostitution are habitually resorted to as a means of eking out a wretched existence?

Deficient as we are in the means of ascertaining the occupations and modes of living of the mass of our town population, there is still sufficient evidence to show that the same state of things exists in other large cities which we have seen in Leeds. Mr. Symonds and Captain Miller, in their account of the wynds of Glasgow, state explicitly that the greater part of the population, amounting to 30,000 persons, have no visible means of support, except "plunder and prostitution." In Manchester, Dr. Kay gives nearly a similar description of a large district; and in Liverpool we have seen that at least a fifth of the whole population are distributed between the cellars and lodging-houses. In Birmingham, which is, in many respects, very superior to the average of manufacturing towns, we have seen that 374 lodging-houses are devoted to the reception of a loose population of Irish and mendicants, and that 228 houses are known as the resorts of thieves, with an average number of twelve thieves resorting daily to each house.* In the metropolis, large districts, such as St. Giles's, are inhabited by a population who have no settled occupation, and who subsist by the resources above described. The total number of persons taken into custody by the Metropolitan Police in the year 1839, was 65,965, or, deducting 21,269 cases of drunkenness, 44,696, of which 14,315 were for larceny and other offences against property without violence, 3154 prostitutes, 3780 vagrants, and 11,370 disorderly and suspicious characters.†

These facts appear to establish incontestibly the result, that a large proportion of the dense masses of population crowded together in the low districts of our large towns have absolutely no regular and recognised occupations, and live, as it were, as outlaws

* In Liverpool, the Police Returns show 212 mendicants' lodging-houses, 591 brothels, 2404 prostitutes, and 5007 thieves and suspected characters known to the police.—*Parliamentary Tables of Population, &c.*, 1841, p. 199.

In Paris, with a population of 900,000, or more than three times the amount of Liverpool, the Police Returns show 3800 regular prostitutes, 8000 thieves, swindlers, &c., of every description, 1500 vagabonds, and 243 low lodging-houses.—Fregier, Chef de Bureau de la Prefecture de la Seine, "Des Classes dangereuses de la Population dans les grandes Villes."

† Parliamentary Tables, 1841, p. 170.

See, also, the Report of the Constabulary Force Commissioners, where it is stated that the number of apprehensions bears a very small proportion to the amount of crime. They conclude "that if we take the lowest estimate, and assume the numbers at large in the enjoyment of impunity, instead of being quadruple, or quintuple, or more, to be only double the numbers annually brought within the cognizance of the law, and if we consider that they are nearly all of the young and able-bodied classes of labourers in the kingdom, the wide extent of moral corruption in operation throughout the country becomes fearfully manifest.—*Report*, p. 11.

In 1836, a Committee of the Liverpool Corporation reported that the fol-

upon society. The manner in which this class is continually recruited and augmented will be only too apparent, when we come to investigate the condition of the numerous classes immediately above them in the social scale, who earn an existence by common and comparatively unskilled labour. Lowest in this scale we must place the unfortunate class of hand-loom weavers. The number of persons, including their families, dependent on hand-loom weaving for existence, is estimated by the committee of 1835 at 840,000, and this estimate is confirmed by the report of the hand-loom weavers' commissioners, published in 1841, who state the numbers at upwards of 800,000. Thirty or forty years ago, this class stood at the head of British operatives in amount of earnings, intelligence, education, and general respectability. The reports of the assistant commissioners who visited the different districts where weaving is carried on, are full of the most touching accounts of men whose intelligence and good conduct would have done honour to the highest circles, sinking gradually under the pressure of circumstances altogether beyond their control, from decent competence to want, and from want to a degree of pinching poverty which almost surpasses belief.

The following account of wages actually paid in 1839 and 1840 to the cotton weavers of Lancashire and Glasgow, given by the hand-loom commissioners in their report, speaks for itself:—

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE DISTRICT.

Heads of families visited	483
Number of persons employed	813
Number of looms idle	213
Number of persons dependent on the earnings of those employed	1955
Average per family per week	4*s.* 11¼*d.*

At Huddersfield the average of 402 weavers, maintaining 1655 persons, was 5*s.* 6⅛*d.* per week, or 2¼*d.* per day for each individual.

At Wigan the average of 113 persons employed gave 3*s.* 11*d.* a week for each.

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lowing account of the number and earnings of criminals in that town was "not exaggerated, but much understated:"—

	Per Ann. £
300 brothels, estimated to obtain an average weekly income of 5*l.*	78,000
12,200 prostitutes residing therein, 4*s.* 6*d.*	124,800
3,000 prostitutes in private lodgings, 30*s.*	234,000
12,000 men cohabiting with prostitutes, 20*s.*	62,400
1,000 adult thieves, 40*s.*	104,000
500 ditto, who work and steal, averaging by crime, 20*s.*	26,000
1,200 juvenile thieves, 10*s.*	31,200
620 thieves and labourers connected with the docks, who earn by crime	73,840
Total	£ 734,240

—*Report*, p. 12.

In Scotland the following table is given by Mr. Symonds as the result of his inquiries, the first class being the average net amount of wages earned by adult skilled artizans on the finest fabrics; the second, the amount earned by less skilled and younger artizans:—

Fabrics.	Chief Place of Manufacture.	Number of Looms.	Clear Weekly Wages.	
			1st Class.	2d Class.
			s. d.	s. d.
Pullicates, ginghams, &c..	Glasgow and Lanarkshire	18,420	7 0	4 6
Shawls, &c.	Paisley and Renfrewshire	7,750	10 6	6 0
Plain muslins	Glasgow, Lanarkshire, &c.	10,080	7 6	4 6
Fancy muslins, silk gauzes, &c.	Paisley and Glasgow	7,860	9 6	6 0
Thibets and tartans	Glasgow and Howick	2,980	7 0	5 6

The number of families corresponding to this number of looms is estimated at 26,160, which, at the rate of four to each family, gives 104,640 individuals; and Mr. Symonds considers that not less than two-thirds of the whole number of weavers belong to the second class of wages. The two following cases are given by Mr. Symonds as a fair average representation "of the wages and distribution of labour in the great bulk of Scottish weavers' families:"—

	Net wages. s.	d.	
No. 1. Man, wife, and five children :—			
Father weaving a 1700 book-muslin	7	6	
First son, 11 years old, weaving a 1200 check	3	4	
Daughter in factory	3	6	
Wife, winding	1	10	
Three children, young	0	0	
Total	16	2	
Or, per person	2	3	3-7ths.
No. 2. Man, wife, and two children :—			
Man weaving a 15^{00} gingham	5	11	
Wife, winding	2	0	
Total	7	11	
Or, per person	1	11½	

Extreme cases are given where the actual earnings of families of seven persons only amounted to 7*s.* 2*d.* per week, or 1*s.* 3-7*d.* per person.

To earn these wages, the average hours of labour are seventy per week.*

The wages earned by the weavers in other manufactures are little better. Mr. Fletcher estimates the earnings of the ribbon weavers of Coventry and the neighbourhood at 5*s.* a week.† Those

* See Assistant Hand-loom Commissioners' Reports, vol. i., p. 6 to 9.

† Ibid. Fletcher, vol. ii., p. 302.

of the best employed linen-weavers of Yorkshire, *during a period of comparative prosperity*, after making the necessary deductions for winding, dressing, &c., and loss of time, at 5*s.* 6*d.* a week for a man's earnings, and less than half that amount for boys and girls.* In the Dundee district the highest earnings of able-bodied linen-weavers do not exceed 7*s.* 6*d.* a week.†

In the finer descriptions of woollen and silk fabrics, and generally where considerable skill or strength, or skill and strength combined, are required, the rate of wages is considerably higher, but this applies to a very small proportion of the total number of hand-loom weavers, and even with those the nominally high rate of wages is often more than compensated by the extreme inconstancy of the employment.‡

Indeed, in forming an estimate of the actual condition of the weaving population, the rates of wages above quoted, miserable as they appear, would give us far too favourable a view. Irregularity of employment is a constant complaint, and the slightest fluctuation in commerce never fails to throw multitudes of looms out of work. The result of personal inquiry in 1838 and 1839, led several of the assistant commissioners to the same conclusion; viz.—that on an average of many years, the weaver was out of employment at least one-third of his whole time.§ Even when in full work, there is a loss of time in changing fabrics on the loom, and going to the manufacturer for work, &c., which, we are told, amounts, on the very lowest average, to one week in eight.‖

Taking the average rate of earnings, after allowing for these deductions, it is evident that the bulk of the population of 800,000 persons depending on hand-loom weaving must exist, under the most favourable circumstances, in a state of extreme destitution. It is no longer a matter of surprise, that in all the great manfacturing towns we find this class competing with the unemployed poor for the most wretched and disgusting tenements, and crowding together into the most pestilential districts. Deplorable as their condition appears in the reports and evidence from which we have quoted, it is, unfortunately, only too certain that it has since been materially deteriorated by the recent stagnation in trade.¶ At Paisley, and in several of the principal seats of the cotton manufacture in Lancashire, distress has increased to such a pitch as to force itself on the attention of the legislature, and

* Assistant Hand-loom Commissioners' Reports, Keyser, vol. i., p. 478.

† Ibid, Harding, vol. i., p. 185.

‡ See Report of Hand-loom Commissioners, p. 18—22.

§ Assistant Hand-loom Commissioners' Reports, Symonds, Mitchell, Otway, Austin.

‖ Ibid., Keyser, vol. i., p. 478.

¶ Reports of Commissioners on Distress in Paisley, Bolton, Stockport, &c., 1841 and 1842.

the result of recent official inquiries shows that a state of things bordering very closely on actual starvation, has prevailed for a considerable period.* In the report of the commissioners who visited Stockport, it is stated, on the authority of a committee of magistrates, manufacturers, and clergy of that town, that of 15,823, inhabiting 2,965 houses, visited by them in the spring of 1842, 1,204 only were found to be fully employed, 2,866 partially employed, and 4,148 able to work wholly without employment. The average weekly wages of those fully employed amounted to 7*s.* 6¼*d.*; of those partially employed to 4*s.* 7¼*d.*; and the average weekly sum available for the support of each of the 15,823 persons was 1*s.* 4¾*d.*† The medical officer of the union states distinctly, that within the last twelve months the condition of the working classes has become worse and worse, and that he has had to treat a great additional number of cases resulting in his opinion "from want of food, and the use of improper food."‡

The reports from Paisley and Bolton, and the documents, issued by the Statistical Society of Manchester, and other bodies, contain a great body of evidence to that effect; but it is superfluous to quote further in support of what is unhappily only too notorious —that in describing the present condition of the weavers, and other classes of the manufacturing population, from evidence taken previously to 1841, a large allowance must be made for subsequent deterioration.

It is said, however, that the hand-loom weavers are an exceptional class, whose condition has been depressed by a variety of unavoidable causes, and who ought to be left entirely out of view in forming an estimate of the working of the modern manufacturing system, and the condition of the manufacturing population. The answer to this is, that in the first place they form by far too large a proportion of the whole manufacturing population to be passed over in this summary way; and in the next, that it is not true that they constitute an exceptional class; but, on the contrary, they represent the condition to which that of most other classes of unskilled adult manufacturing labour appears to be tending.

The analysis of occupations given in the population returns of 1831 shows only 404,317 males above twenty years of age employed in manufactures (exclusive of hand-loom weaving), or in making manufacturing machinery. The number of families employed in hand-loom weaving is, as we have already seen, upwards of 200,000; consequently, the class of hand-loom weavers,

* This was written in 1842; since the spring of 1843, we are happy to say that there has been a decided revival in most branches of manufacturing industry.

† Report by Messrs. Power and Twisleton, in Stockport.

‡ Ibid., J. Blackshaw, Esq., p. 81.

whose condition we have described, constitute *at least one-third of the adult male manufacturing population.*

Nor is it true that they constitute an exceptional class. The following estimate given by Mr. Baines, and adopted by Mr. Macculloch (both authorities with a strong disposition to represent the manufacturing system in the most favourable light), will show to what a comparatively small proportion of the total amount of manufacturing labour the assertion that it is highly remunerated will apply :—

Estimate of the number and wages of different classes of Operatives employed in the Cotton Manufacture.

No. of Operatives.	Average Weekly Wages. s.	d.
237,000 engaged in spinning and power-loom weaving..	10	0
250,000 hand-loom weavers	7	0
159,300 lace-workers	2	5
45,000 calico printers	10	0
33,000 makers of cotton hosiery.....	6	0

In the case of the hand-loom weavers we have quoted sufficient evidence to show that the average of 7*s.* a week is greatly too high. In the other cases there is reason to believe that the rate is also overstated;* however, even as here given, it is evident that very few branches of the cotton manufacture afford a sufficient remuneration for labour to maintain a decent existence. Nor is this all. When we come to analyze the composition of the well-paid class of labourers working in factories and in connexion with machinery, we are astonished to find how very small a proportion consists of *adult male labour.* The returns of the Factory Commissioners show that of 220,134 persons employed in cotton factories, only 58,053, or about one-fourth of the whole, were *males above eighteen years of age.*† The moral and physical evils resulting from the disproportionate substitution of female and infant for adult male labour, are too well known to allow us to consider operative families in a healthy and satisfac-

* In the Sanitary Reports on the Condition of the Labouring Classes in Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Derbyshire, several instances are given where the houses of stocking-makers have been visited, and in all these cases the earnings of the head of the family are stated at *about 7s. a week, subject to deductions,* which, as in the case of the hand-loom weaver, will reduce the net amount of earnings, after paying rent, &c., to about 4*s.* 6*d.* or 5*s.* a week, when in full employment. The Appendix to the Report of the Committee on Machinery, Session 1841, gives a number of instances showing that the current net wages of the stocking-makers and frame-work knitters of Nottingham and Leicester do not exceed 5*s.* a week.

† In other manufactures the disproportion is even greater: out of 424,209 operatives employed in the five most important branches of manufactures—viz., cotton, wool, worsted, flax, and silk, only 96,752, or less than 23 per cent. of the whole, were males above 18 years of age; 130,218 were females above 18; and 114,603 females below 18.—*Factory Commissioners' Report,* 1841.

tory condition, even where a large amount of earnings is obtained by the united labour of those members whose sex and age ought to exempt them from the necessity of incessant toil. To the comparatively small number of spinners, carders, power-loom weavers, engineers, overlookers, and other factory labourers, with the addition of a few of the best paid calico printers, bobbinet-makers, &c., must be confined the assertion, "that in an ordinary state of trade, those of the operatives who are employed in the cotton manufacture, in connexion with steam power and machinery, appear to command, by the value of their labour, the means of enjoyment of the comforts of life to an extent and degree unknown to a large portion of the population of this country."*

The same remarks will apply with equal force to the other great national manufactures in which machinery is extensively used—viz., those of woollen, linen, and silk; and, on the whole, the following may be taken as a fair and impartial general statement of the condition of the population of about two-and-a-half millions, who appear from the returns to derive their subsistence directly from manufactures, under ordinary circumstances, and in an average state of trade:—About one-third plunged in extreme misery, and hovering on the verge of actual starvation;—another third, or more, earning an income something better than that of the common agricultural labourer, but under circumstances very prejudicial to health, morality, and domestic comfort—viz., by the labour of the young children, girls, and mothers of families, in crowded factories;—and, finally, a third earning high wages, amply sufficient to support them in respectability and comfort.

Such is the state of things *under ordinary circumstances;* but, since the commercial crisis of 1837, and especially during the last eighteen months,† a great change for the worse has taken place. Wages have generally fallen 15 or 20 per cent., employment has become more and more precarious, and distress, extending upwards, has invaded even the upper class of highly-paid workmen connected with machinery. It is a remarkable circumstance that strikes and disturbances invariably originate with this class, and not with those whose condition might be supposed to be much more intolerable. When distress reaches this class we soon hear of it, and vigorous attempts are made to resist reductions in wages by combinations and intimidation. We shall have occasion to return to this subject; but, in the meantime, we merely allude to it for the purpose of saying that, alarming as these outbreaks appear, they are much less so than

* Messrs. Power and Twisleton. Report on the Population of Stockport, p. 67.

† Written in November, 1842.

the silent and passive endurance which makes misery and degradation familiar. Perhaps the most alarming passage in the two volumes of Reports from which we have quoted so largely, is that in which, after describing the disgusting filth and indecency of the abodes of the poorer class of manufacturing labourers, an intelligent medical observer adds, "that in the course of twelve years' practice among this class, *he never heard a complaint of insufficient accommodation.*"*

Any thing is better than this; *any thing* better than that the bulk of the population should be ground by want and misery down to a state of contented degradation. This is the *real* danger;—one much more imminent and formidable than that the disconnected efforts of a few political agitators, Chartist orators, and discontented trades-unionists, should be able to succeed in an appeal to physical force in overturning an established Government, supported by a powerful aristocracy, a numerous middle class, and a disciplined array of cannon and bayonets.

CHAPTER IV.

CONDITION OF THE CLASS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS.

We come next to consider the condition of the class of agricultural labourers. According to the late census, the number of adult male labourers employed in agriculture in Great Britain, was 887,167. These, with their families, will represent a population of not less than 3,500,000, or about a fifth of the whole population ; and a third more than the population of labourers directly employed in manufactures.† The wages, resources, manner of life, and physical condition of this numerous and important class are easily described. Unlike the manufacturing class, there are few gradations in their condition, and the description applicable to one part of the country applies, with little variation, to others. Throughout England, generally, the agricultural peasantry are day-labourers, hired by the week or job—in most cases by the week—possessing no property, and living in rented cottages.

The rate of wages earned by an able-bodied labourer varies from about 8*s*. to 12*s*. a week, and may be stated on the average

* Dr. Scott. Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 274.

† The same result is arrived at by comparing the number of families (961,134) stated in the population returns to be employed in agriculture, or deducting 2-7ths for occupiers, 686,524 families of agricultural labourers, with the total number of 3,414,175 families in Great Britain.

at about 9*s.* or 10*s.** Employment is, on the whole, pretty constant for men of tolerably good conduct, except occasionally during severe winters, or periods of unusual agricultural distress. The extra earnings of a family during harvest time, &c., may, amount to from 4*l.* 10*s.* to 6*l.* 10*s.*, which may be set against the rent of the cottage, fuel, &c., though in many parts of England this source of earnings has been greatly reduced by the influx of Irish labourers.†

The income of 9*s.* or 10*s.* a week may, therefore, be supposed to go entirely towards the current expenses of living, and the question is how, with this income, do the families of agricultural labourers manage to exist? The question is one of considerable difficulty, as the following extract from a report of one of the most intelligent of the assistant poor-law commissioners will sufficiently show:—

In the workhouse, where strict economy is studied, and where we are constantly told that we give the inmates too little to eat, it is well known that a man, his wife, and five children, cannot usually be kept under 1*l.* per week, and this is reckoning nothing for house-rent; and all the articles required, being purchased in large contracts, are obtained 20 per cent. under the shop prices. Taking into account these two latter considerations, it appears that such a family could not be maintained in a state of independence out of the workhouse, with the same comforts they have in it, at a less cost than 25*s.* a week, which is more than double the general agricultural weekly wages in England.—*E. C. Tuffnell, Esq., Assistant Poor-law Commissioner. Sanitary Reports*, vol. i., p. 37.

The only solution is, that where the labourer has a family to support, they do *not* obtain out of the workhouse the same comforts which the pauper obtains in it. They sacrifice a great deal

* In the evidence before the select committee on agriculture in 1836 the following wages are stated as the usual rates by practical witnesses. In Buckinghamshire, 8*s.* a week; in Essex, 9*s.* to 10*s.*; in Nottinghamshire, 9*s.* All the witnesses concur in a depression of wages to the amount of about 2*s.* since 1833, which is attributed, in part, to the distress of farmers, owing to the cheapness of corn, and partly to the rise in wages, occasioned by the fires and excesses in 1830, having fallen back to the old level as terror subsided.

In the evidence before the committee on the Poor-law Amendment Act, in 1837, the average rate of wages in Sussex, Kent, and the other southern counties, is stated at from 8*s.* to 10*s*, a slight rise having taken place (but not sufficient to compensate for the rise in the price of provisions), attributed by some witnesses to the operation of the New Poor-law, and by others to the rise in the price of corn.

In the latest reports of the assistant poor-law commissioners we find the following statements:—"The wages of a labouring man are in some parts of Devon 7*s.* a week, in others 8*s.* or 9*s.* The usual rent paid is on an average 1*s.* 6*d.* a week."—*W. J. Gilbert, Esq. Sanitary Reports*, vol. i., p. 15.

In Norfolk and Suffolk wages vary, generally speaking, from 10*s* to 12*s.* a week. Harvest wages vary from 5*l.* to 6*l.* 10*s.*, and the rent is generally paid from this source.—*E. Twisleton, Esq. Sanitary Reports*, vol. i., p. 41.

† See Reports of Assistant Commissioners, Sanitary Reports, vol. i., where detailed accounts are given of the rents of cottages, &c., in different parts of England. The result is, that the usual rent is from 3*l.* to 5*l.* a year.

he way of warmth, lodging, and food, rather than incur the penalty of restraint and separation. The separation of families has proved in practice a most efficient means of deterring the married labourer from applying for relief.

This is fully borne out by evidence. Several witnesses were examined before the committee on the Poor-law Amendment Act, in 1837, from whose evidence we extract the following passages :—

H. Sopp, labourer, has a wife and four children, earns 9*s.* 6*d.* a week ; spends 7*s.* 2*d.* in flour and yeast ; has been without tea, cheese, butter, soap, firing and candles, clothes, and beer, for three months.

— Slements, labourer, has a wife and four children ; earns 11*s.* 6*d.* a week ; spends 7*s.* 3*d.* in flour and yeast.

— Pullen, labourer, has a wife and six children ; wages 11*s.* 6*d.* ; flour and yeast 9*s.* 7*d.*

The following is the actual weekly expenditure of a labouring man, with a wife and six children, in March, 1841, given by Mr. Tuffnell, which will afford a fair average view of the manner of living of the agricultural population of the southern and midland counties of England.

	s.	*d.*
6 gallons of flour	8	0
Yeast	0	3
1lb. of meat and ¼lb of suet	0	8
1lb. of butter	1	0
1lb. of cheese	0	6
½lb of candles	0	3½
½lb. of soap	0	3½
Potatoes	1	0
Worsted, starch, cotton, and tape	0	3
Total	12	3*

This leaves nothing for rent, clothing, education, or any other expenses, the only fund for defraying which consists of the extra earnings during harvest-time, a resource which in many parts of England is greatly limited by the periodical influx of Irish labourers. It is obvious, from a glance at this statement, that the bulk of agricultural labourers in the country are, *at the best*, just able to struggle on from hand to mouth ; and that any suspension of employment, rise in the price of provisions, or unforeseen casualty, must of necessity compel them to resort to charity, or to descend to a coarser diet, and exchange the habits of an English for those of an Irish peasant. The shifts to which they have recourse to meet any of the above contingencies are thus described by Mr. Tuffnell.

Since the price of corn has risen many of the labourers have been compelled to resort to an inferior sort of flour, termed "sharps," in order to obtain a sufficiency of food. Tea has not risen in price, but has been replaced by a dele-

* Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 42.

terious mixture, of which some of the medical men make great complaints. It is now, too, usually drunk without sugar, as the great rise in price has caused the latter article nearly to disappear from the labourer's house. In some cases an infusion of burnt crusts has been substituted for tea.*

Such, then, is the condition of the English agricultural labourer; one degree better off than the hand-loom weaver and unemployed population of large towns, he can, while in health and strength, and under ordinary circumstances, support a family in the bare necessaries of life, under a roof of their own, and in comparative decency and respectability; but he can only *just* do this by unremitting labour and unceasing economy; he has absolutely nothing to look forward to, nothing to fall back upon. To use the words of an assistant poor-law commissioner. "The English agricultural labourer, even if he has transcendant abilities, has scarcely any prospect of rising in the world, and of becoming a small farmer. He commences his career as a weekly labourer, and the probability is, that whatever may be his talents and industry, as a weekly labourer he will end his days."† This is the *best* side of the picture,—what is the reverse? If he has no chance of *rising* in the world, how many chances has he of *falling?* If he is thrown out of employment—if he loses his health—if he has a large family of girls or young children—if he yields to temptation, and becomes irregular in his habits, what is to become of him? The answer is obvious: for a time he will be assisted by casual charity, and struggle on against extreme privations; but if the causes of distress continue, one or other of two things will be his final lot—he will be enrolled among the 1,072,978 paupers receiving parish relief under the harsh conditions of the new poor-law, *or*, he will be starved out of the country into some large town, and absorbed in the floating population who tenant the cellars and lodging-houses, and live by the worst-paid description of manufacturing industry, or by thieving, prostitution, and casual employment. Let it always be remembered, that when we read in Poor-law Reports, and Treatises on Political Economy, of *labour being absorbed, and distress disappearing by refusing relief*, this is, in nine cases out of ten, what the thing practically means.‡

Alison, the sheriff of Glasgow, who is well known in the literary world as the author of the *History of the French Revolution*, and

* Sanitary Reports, vol. i., pp. 42, 43.

† E. Twisleton, Esq. Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 142.

‡ We are anxious not to be misunderstood as wishing to swell the vulgar clamour against the poor-law commissioners, or to charge them with personal inhumanity. They have carried too far the false theory that it is sufficient to keep poverty out of sight in order to annihilate it, and that the refusal of out-door relief is the panacea for all the evils of society, but they have believed this conscientiously, in common with most of the recognised authorities and enlightened men of their generation.

whose efforts, combined with those of his brother, Dr. Alison, of Edinburgh, on behalf of the poor, give him a still better title to the esteem of his countrymen, gives the following striking picture of the career of a family compelled to leave the country, and take up their abode in a great city. "They bring with them, we shall suppose, the simplicity of country life, and the orderly religious habits which prevail in their sequestered home. In what circumstances do they find themselves after they have been six months members of a more populous community? The extravagant price of lodgings compels him to take refuge in one of the crowded districts of the town, in the midst of thousands in similar necessitous circumstances with themselves. Under the same roof they probably find a nest of prostitutes, and in the next door a den of thieves. In the room which they occupy they hear incessantly the revel of intoxication, or are compelled to witness the riot of licentiousness. When the young men return in the evening from their work, they are surrounded by persons whose seemingly joyous and indolent life forms a grievous contrast to their own severe and incessant toil; when the young women cross the threshold of their door, they meet the votaries of passion, and are assailed by the arts of seduction. Guilt seems alone to share in the pleasures of life; virtue is left to pine in unnoticed and joyless obscurity. The great and the affluent, whose smile might reward their efforts to sustain the struggle, are never to be seen: the hideous mass of poverty which they cannot relieve banishes them from these gloomy abodes. The poor are left alone and unbefriended to sustain the terrible struggle with poverty, temptation, and despair. Present enjoyment seems the universal object of life; the men hasten from their masters' workshops to spend their wages often in the delirium of intoxication; the women to forget their degradation in the arms of their lovers, or seduce the unwary into the pleasures of sin. The habit of indulgence produces an incessant craving for its renewal; and life comes to be spent in the endless routine of labouring to produce the means of gratification, and of suffering life through years of existence, in order to forget it in hours of pleasure.

"The continuance of the story, will, probably, not brighten the picture. One of the sons is inveigled into the society of some of the numerous bands of thieves by whom he is surrounded; he commits a housebreaking, and is transported for the offence. The virtue of the daughters speedily gives way in the tumult of licentiousness by which they are surrounded, and they find themselves left upon the streets, abandoned by their relatives, and with no other resource but to entice others into the fatal vortex by which they themselves have been swallowed up. Some perish in early youth from the combined effect of bodily disease

and mental anguish ; others, grown bold in guilt, fall under the lash of the law, and waste their years in imprisonment or exile. The offspring of a once happy and virtuous family are thrown upon the streets to pick up a precarious subsistence from charity or depredation."*

Still more precise and specific is the following account of the process of *absorption*, given by C. R. Baird, Esq., Secretary of the Glasgow Relief Committee, before the committee on emigration of 1841. " The tenants at will (speaking of the Highland peasantry) are often driven out in great numbers, and sent in upon the large cities, and especially Glasgow (there are 20,000 poor Highlanders in Glasgow), where their condition is most miserable ; they are particularly subject to the worst diseases on coming to a city—particularly fever and small-pox. They lose heart, the change of scene and climate affects them, and they sink into a kind of hopeless state."†

To what extent this absorption of agricultural labour into cities has gone on, and how largely the class of rural labourers have contributed to swell the list of fever-patients, and to augment the mass of destitution and crime of whose existence we have seen such appalling proofs, will be evident from the results shown by the population returns. Dividing the counties of England and Scotland respectively into equal numbers, and placing in one list those which in 1831 contained the largest proportionate amount of agricultural population, and in the other list those where the proportion of manufacturing, mining, and trading population was greatest, it appears that in England the increase in twenty-one agricultural counties (considering the three ridings of Yorkshire as three distinct counties), has been, from 1831 to 1841, only 8.4 per cent., while in the remaining twenty-one counties it has been 17.3 per cent., or more than twofold greater than in the more agricultural counties.

In Scotland the increase in the sixteen most agricultural counties has been only 4.02 per cent., while in the remaining sixteen counties there has been an increase of 15.19 per cent., or nearly four times the rate attained in the agricultural counties.

When we consider that in the agricultural counties the average duration of life is much higher, and the mortality among infants considerably less; and also that under the old system of poor laws a direct bounty on population was given in most of the agricultural counties, it is difficult to resist the conclusion, that a large proportion of the increase of population in the agricultural counties, failing to obtain employment and support at home, has gone to swell the numbers of the town and manufacturing population.‡

* Alison. Principles of Population, vol ii. p. 82.

† Report of Emigration Committee. Evidence of C. R. Baird, Esq.

‡ The slower rate of increase of population in the agricultural districts is no

If the general rate of increase had been uniform throughout the counties, and there had been no migrating from one district to another in search of subsistence, the population of the more agricultural counties would have been greater than it is—

In England and Wales, by	289,487
In Scotland, by	60,512*

These results are borne out by the fact, that in Scotland, where there are no poor laws, the proportionate rate of increase in favour of the manufacturing counties had been double that in England. If there had been no poor-law in England, and the bulk of the aged, infirm, and destitute who now receive relief in the agricultural counties had been, as is notoriously the case in Scotland, *starved into the large towns*,† the proportion would have been almost precisely the same in the two countries.

In Scotland the position of the agricultural labourer is materially different from that of the same class in England. The following is given by a practical witness as a fair average statement of the wages and terms of hiring of agricultural labourers in Scotland:—

Servants are engaged half-yearly. Unmarried ploughmen have from 5*l.* to 6*l.* 10*s.*, with two pecks of oatmeal weekly, and an allowance of milk and potatoes, with lodging and fuel generally in a bothie, that is, a house attached near to the steading, where they all live together and make their own food. Other unmarried labourers get 4*l.* 10*s.* to 5*l.* half-yearly. Married men-servants are engaged by the year; they generally get a house and garden, and maintenance for a cow, and about 8*l.* of wages, with 6½ bolls of oatmeal, and an allowance of potatoes, or ground for raising them, with a few barrels of coals or brushwood for fuel. Farm labourers by the day get about 1*s.* 3*d.* in winter; in summer, 1*s.* 8*d.* to 2*s.*—*Report of the Committee on Agriculture*, 1836, p. 218.

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doubt in a great measure the result of a superiority in condition, and sounder state of society. In rural districts, where the condition of the peasantry is comfortable, it has been repeatedly proved by experience that there is never any tendency to an undue increase in the population, but this is certainly not the state of many of our agricultural counties, where the condition of the peasantry approximates to that of the Irish, and the principles of increase are in full operation.

* G. R. Porter, Esq. Journal of the Statistical Society of London, January 1842.

† The evidence on this point stated by Dr. Alison on the Practical Operation of the Scottish System of Management of the Poor; Dr. Cowan's Vital Statistics of Glasgow; Report of Committee of the General Assembly on the State of the Poor; Report of Committee of the House of Commons on Emigration from the Highlands, &c., is conclusive.

In Glasgow, not 15 per cent. of the patients admitted into the principal fever hospital were natives of the town; 40 per cent. were from the Highlands and agricultural districts of Scotland; 65 per cent. of the individuals received into the House of Refuge at Edinburgh are not natives of the town. In Dundee, out of 944 paupers, 344 only were natives of the town; and in Aberdeen only 420 out of 1517.—*Dr. Alison, Journal of Statistical Society of London, for year* 1840, p. 214.

This is a pretty fair statement of what was the usual system throughout Scotland, and still is so, in many districts. Where it is fairly acted upon, the condition of the married labourer is decidedly superior to that of the English labourer of the same class. His *money* wages are less, but they come in a large sum, over and above the ordinary daily sustenance of his family, which is in a great measure secured by the allowances from the farm and produce of the garden. The privilege of keeping a cow is of inestimable value, especially where there are young children in the family; and the period of hiring, by the year, gives a degree of respectability and stability to his position far beyond that of the day labourer. Accordingly, among this class we frequently find, along with a good deal of slovenliness and disregard for neatness and comfort, a decidedly higher standard of intelligence, foresight, respectability, and moral elevation, than among any other class of the labouring population of Britain, or perhaps of the world. It is in this class that we may yet find such scenes as those described by Burns in the *Cottar's Saturday Night*, and such characters as those depicted by Walter Scott in *Jeanie Deans*.

There is too much reason, however, to fear that this class, the pride of Scotland and representative of the best points of the national character, is fast disappearing. The conditions above described have been of late years very generally infringed, to the disadvantage of the weaker party. In many counties the privilege of keeping a cow has been taken away, and even the allowance of milk substituted for it has been discontinued as troublesome and expensive. The number of married cottars living on the farm has also been greatly reduced, and the bothie system, as it is called, or employment of unmarried men living together in a bothie or hovel attached to the steading, has been greatly extended. Of this system, it is hardly necessary to say that a more effective means of brutalising and demoralising a peasantry could not be devised, than that of crowding together a parcel of young men, half of them perhaps strangers, Irish, or bad characters, in a hovel by themselves, without even an attempt at moral superintendence. It is, in fact, transplanting the lodging-house from the wynds of Glasgow to the heart of the rural districts. This is one of the worst evils that has attended the introduction of the large farm system.* The land is cultivated with more skill and economy, that is to say, it has become a much better machine for producing rent. More produce is raised, with fewer hands.

* It is not meant to condemn the large-farm system *absolutely*, but only to point out its bad effects when agricultural improvements are enforced without any regard to moral obligations.

But, on the other hand, of the rural population thus* thrown out of employment, one part has been ruthlessly starved into the large towns to augment the mass of misery and crime, and glut the market of manufacturing labour; the other has been compelled to accept worse and worse terms, until at last the standard of comfort and respectability has been broken down, and the condition of the operative is frequently little better in the corn than in the cotton manufacture.†

The same causes have been at work, and have produced similar effects in the agricultural districts of England; in a less marked degree, however, than in Scotland, for several reasons; first, because the standard of the English agricultural labourer, owing mainly to the practice of hiring by the week, and to the want of education and religious instruction, was not so high to begin with; secondly, because the existence of a poor-law has rendered it more difficult to grind down the labourer; and thirdly, because the manufacturing system, *i. e.* the system of considering *land* simply and solely as a *machine* for the production of wealth, has not yet been introduced so completely and extensively as in Scotland. Still there is evidence, independent of that afforded by the increase of pauperism, and the extensive migration to the manufacturing districts, which tends to show that the condition of the English agricultural labourer has sensibly deteriorated in the course of the last half century. Formerly, almost every villager had his cow and plot of land. Now, it is extremely rare to find a common labourer who has either one or the other.‡ Since 1760, no less than 3742 bills for inclosing commons have been passed.§ This is, in many respects, a national advantage; but as regards the agricultural labourer of the district, it

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* And by the influx of Irish labourers, which in many parts of Scotland, especially the western counties, has been a most active means of lowering the condition of the Scottish peasantry.

† In an examination of the agricultural population of Scotland, also, must not be forgotten the class of crofters, or peasants living on a small patch of ground barely sufficient to employ their labour. This class numbers a population of between 200,000 and 300,000 in the Highlands and Hebrides, whose condition is in no respect better than that of the poorest Irish. In 1837, thousands were reduced to live "on shell-fish and wild-mustard," and would have perished of hunger but for the relief afforded by a subscription in England. The Rev. Dr. Macleod, well known for his benevolent exertions on that occasion, when asked whether he considers the distress of 1836-7 likely to recur, answers, "I feel an awful terror of its recurring, for the slightest failure of the potato crop in any one year must occasion it."—*Report of the Committee on Emigration from the Highlands.*

‡ See a remarkable article in the *Quarterly Review*, March, 1830, written by Sir Walter Scott.

§ Between 1801 and 1835, 3,511,770 acres of common land, were enclosed. —*Statistics of British Empire*, p. 13.

is, in nine cases out of ten, a pure, unmitigated loss. He is deprived of a valuable right of property, and gets no adequate compensation. He loses his cow, and gets nothing in exchange but leave to spend his wages in the beer-shop. Even if wages had risen considerably, the condition of the agricultural labourer must, under these circumstances, have undergone a change for the worse; but wages have not risen, but, on the contrary, have fallen; that is to say, *real* wages, estimated, not in money, but by the command afforded over the necessaries of life. This is placed beyond dispute by the following document given by one of the assistant poor-law commissioners, being an actual account of the manner in which a labourer's family, with four children, lived between fifty and sixty years ago, on the then current wages of 6*s.* a week:—

	s.	*d.*
Four and-a-half gallons of flour at 6*d.*	2	3
Grinding, baking, and yeast	0	5
Seven pounds of beef at 2½*d.*	1	5½
Two-and-a-half pounds of cheese at 2½*d.*	0	6¼
(Or 1½ pounds of butter at 4*d.*)		
Oatmeal and salt	0	2½
One oz. of tea	0	2
Half-pound of sugar	0	3
Firing (mostly heath turf, cut free from the common or wood)	0	3
Candles	0	3
Soap	0	3
Total	6	0*

Comparing this with the account of the expenditure of a family in 1841, given before at page 30, it will be evident that a great deterioration has taken place in the condition and standard of living of the agricultural labouring classes during the last half century. It is evident, also, how fallacious any comparison must prove between the condition of the labouring classes in different countries, which is founded only on the basis of *money* wages, and how unfounded is the assertion that a general abundance of wealth in a country, and high standard of prices, are necessarily, and under all circumstances, advantageous for the working population. The same period of half a century which has made such a change for the worse in the condition of the English agricultural labourer, has seen more than a half of the same class in France rise from the position of feudal serfs, or common day-labourers, into that of independent owners of property. The same process is rapidly going on, and it is the *common* lot of a well-conducted French agricultural labourer to save money enough to buy a piece of land. And yet we are told to pity them, and congratulate ourselves on the superior condition of our own peasantry, because

* Mr. Tuffnell. Sanitary Reports, vol. i. p. 43.

the French labourer lives on rye or barley bread. We are reminded of Madame Roland's exclamation to the statue of Liberty, and tempted to cry "Oh, political economy, what nonsense has been written in thy name!"*

CHAPTER V.

CONDITION OF CLASSES OF LABOURING POPULATON EMPLOYED IN MINES, FISHERIES, CANALS, RAILWAYS, &c.

THE mining population constitute another important division of the labouring class. The population returns of 1831 give a total of 608,712 males, above twenty years of age, employed as labourers, not agricultural, as miners, quarriers, fishermen, &c. This information is not very distinct, but as the number of men and boys employed in the British fisheres is calculated at about 220,000, and as the number of boys employed may, in the case both of the mines and fisheries, be estimated at about one-third of the number of adults above eighteen years, the male population engaged in mining pursuits must be about half a million. This agrees with the detailed estimate given by Macculloch of 240,000 persons directly engaged in the iron trade, 150,000 in the coal trade, 71,000 in the mines of Cornwall and Devonshire, and 8000 in the salt mines of Cheshire, &c. Allowing for females and boys below eight or nine years of age, whose employment in mines is an exception to the general rule, this will give a population of about 1,200,000 persons depending on mining industry for their daily bread.

Abundant evidence as to the condition of this class has recently been collected by the commissioners appointed, on the motion of Lord Ashley, for inquiring into the employment of children in mines and collieries, whose report has attracted public attention strongly to the subject, and led to legislative measures by which the most flagrant of the abuses exposed will be, it is hoped, effectually corrected. On the whole, with the exception of the abuses referred to—consisting principally of the employment of women under ground, under circumstances revolting to decency and destructive of morality, and of children at too early an age—the condition of the mining class appears very superior to that of the

* Mr. Chadwick, in his Summary of the Sanitary Reports, observes—"If a high and various meat-diet were the cause of health, industry, and morality, those virtues should stand highest amongst the population of the lodging-houses, for more meat is consumed in those abodes of pestilence, than amongst the industrious population of the village."

agricultural or manufacturing population. As far as physical and material advantages are concerned, their condition, indeed, appears to be, generally speaking, most satisfactory. The usual rates of wages for men above eighteen years of age are stated by the commissioners as follows:—Staffordshire, coal and iron works, 15*s.* to 18*s.* a week; Warwickshire, 18*s.* a week; Yorkshire, 20*s.* to 25*s.*; Durham and Northumberland, 20*s.* to 30*s.*; Cornwall, 40*s.* to 65*s.* per month; South Wales, 25*s.* to 60*s.* a week; Lanarkshire, 24*s.* to 40*s.* a week.

When we add to this, that the labour of all the boys in the family (and in some districts of the girls also) becomes available at the age of nine or ten, at a rate seldom lower than that which the handloom-weaver receives (4*s.* to 5*s.* a week), which increases regularly up to 15*s.* or 20*s.* a week by the time the boy reaches eighteen, it will be evident that the pecuniary means of most collier and mining families are very ample.

The following is given as a fair average instance of the earnings and expenditure of a collier family in the Tyne and Wear district in 1841, by one of the commissioners employed in the late inquiry:—

EARNINGS PER FORTNIGHT.	£	*s.*	*d.*
Father, two weeks	2	4	0
Putter, one boy, 17 years of age	1	16	8
Driver, one boy, 12 ditto	0	13	9
Trapper, one boy, 8 ditto	0	9	2
	£5	3	7
OUTLAY PER FORTNIGHT.			
Mutton, 14lb.	0	8	9
Flour, 5 stone	0	13	0
Maslin, or mixed grain, 3 stone	0	7	6
Bacon, 14lb.	0	9	4
Potatoes, ½ boll	0	2	3
Oatmeal	0	0	6
Butter, 2lb.; milk, 3*d.* per day	0	6	0
Coffee, 1¼lb.	0	3	0
Tea, ¼lb.	0	1	6
Sugar, 3lb.	0	2	0
Candles	0	0	6½
Soap	0	1	8
Pepper, salt, mustard, &c.	0	0	6
Tobacco and beer	0	4	0
	3	0	6½
Shoes, 9*s.* per month	0	4	6
Clothes, flannels, stockings, &c.	0	17	6
Sundries	0	2	6
	£4	5	0½

Contribution to benefit fund, generally 1*s.* 3*d.* per month. Rent and fuel are free.

The contrast between this and the weekly budget of the agricul-

tural labourer, given in the last chapter, is very great, and shows what powerful causes must have been in operation to depress the condition of the latter below the fair standard at which labour ought to be remunerated. The principal causes for the high rate of remuneration of mining labour appear to be—first, that the employment being hazardous, and to those not regularly bred to it disagreeable, there is little competition from the unemployed labourers of other classes; secondly, that a large *fixed* capital being necessarily invested in the construction of mines, the miners possess a sort of monopoly; and there has not been that ruinous competition which has led manufacturers to undersell one another, until the price of the article produced left neither profit for the capitalist, nor subsistence to the workman: thirdly, that machinery being inapplicable to supersede labour, and a small amount of *circulating* capital, exclusive of labour, being required, the labourer has maintained an independent position; and, in fact, worked rather as a partner, on a system of joint profits, than as a journeyman hired and dismissed by the day or week. The last point is one of such importance with reference to the great economical question of capital and labour, that we shall quote a few passages illustrative of its practical operation.

In Cornwall the mines are worked strictly on the system of joint adventure, gangs of miners contracting with the agent, who represents the owner of the mine, to execute a certain portion of a vein, and fit the ore for market, at the price of so much in the pound of the sum for which the ore is sold. These contracts are put up at certain regular periods, generally every two months, and taken by a voluntary partnership of men accustomed to the mine. This system has its disadvantages, in consequence of the uncertainty and irregularity of the earnings, and consequent necessity of living for long periods on credit, but it has advantages which more than counterbalance these drawbacks. It produces a degree of intelligence, independence, and moral elevation which raise the condition and character of the Cornish miner far above that of the generality of the labouring class. We are told by Dr. Barham,* that "they are not only, as a class intelligent for labourers, but men of considerable knowledge." Also, that "they have a character of independence, something American, the system by which the contracts are let giving the takers entire freedom to make arrangements among themselves; so that each man feels, as a partner in his little firm, that he meets his employers on nearly equal terms. The tributor, likewise, entertains a hope—often realised if he is a good miner—that some fortunate contracts will put him on a parity as to station with the wealthier individuals near him, who have for the

* Report of Children's Employment Commission in Mines and Colleries, Appendix, pp. 758, 759.

most part, at no remote period, occupied some of the lower steps of the ladder on which he himself stands.

With this basis of intelligence and independence in their character, we are not surprised when we hear that "a very great number of miners are now located on possessions of their own, leased for three lives, or ninety-nine years, on which they have built houses;"* or that "281,541*l.* are deposited in savings' banks in Cornwall, of which two-thirds are estimated to belong to miners;"† and, finally, that they are, as a class, "a religious people, leading habitually excellent and religious lives, and giving conclusive evidence of the real influence of the great doctrines of revelation on their hearts, by their equanimity under suffering and privation, and in calmness and resignation when death is known to be inevitable."‡ This is, by many degrees, the brightest picture we have ever met with of the condition of any considerable portion of the labouring class in England at the present day.§

In other mining districts the same system prevails, though to a much less extent. In the Staffordshire district the coal and iron mines are worked by "butties," or contractors, who are described as being "generally steady, well-doing men, who have risen from being common workmen by their good behaviour and power of self-restraint."‖ The "butty goes down into the pit himself, with the men, and remains with them all day, to direct them and keep them to their duty;" and he settles with them for their work when he receives the price of the mineral raised from the owners of the mines, generally every fortnight. Under this system we have seen that a rate of wages prevails "nearly three times as high as that of other labour in the same district;"

* Report of Children's Employment Commission in Mines and Collieries, Appendix, p. 753. † Ibid. p. 753. ‡ Ibid. p. 760.

§ The reasons assigned for the high moral standard among a large proportion of the Cornish Miners are "the ministration of the Church of England, exercised by an able and excellent body of clergy, and the persevering zeal of the Wesleyan methodists, whose system has been found particularly congenial to the miner's character of mind."—*Report*, p. 760. These are obviously means which might be employed elsewhere with equal effect. In fact, the evidence which establishes the existence of heathen darkness and demoralisation among large classes of the population, establishes also that this has been invariably the result of gross neglect on the part of the upper classes. Wherever any individual or body of men have done their duty, a little good has *invariably*, as in the instance of the Cornish Miners, *gone a long way*. There are many testimonies as to the good resulting from the exertions of the Wesleyans, who, during the last century, seem to have been almost the only missionaries of the poor. The Church of England, in these days of reviving zeal, would do well to take a lesson from the Wesleyans, and endeavour to incorporate in itself some of the elements of a popular ministry—a ministry adapted to the wants of the labouring classes.

‖ Report of Children's Employment Commission in Mines and Collieries, p. 3.

and we are told that "the very best feeling usually exists between the employers and the employed."*

In the great coal districts of Northumberland and Durham the relations of capitalist and labourer are more distinct, and we hear of mutual distrusts, and that "a prominent feature of the pitman's character is jealousy of his superiors, and deep-rooted suspicion of his employers; it being universally assumed as a truth, *amply established by experience*, that his master *can* have no desire to benefit him."† Even here, however, the condition of the miner is comparatively independent, the universal period of hiring being for a twelvemonth, by regular bond, with fixed stipulations as to the price of work, and a *minimum* allowance of 15*s.* a week secured at all events for the whole period.‡ In the Scotch collieries the collier is more in the position of the ordinary day-labourer, engaging for a short period, and being liable to be dismissed at a moment's warning; and here it is well worthy of remark, the character of the class is, in every respect, decidedly inferior to that of the English miner, their earnings lower, and the practice of female and infant labour much more general.§

On the whole, however, the physical condition of the mining population is very superior to that of most other classes of labourers, and they have a feeling of rude, manly independence, sometimes degenerating into coarseness and brutality, but affording an excellent raw material for civilisation to work upon, and preserving more, perhaps, than any other portion of the population, the frank, blunt, rough-and-ready characteristics of the old native breed of British bull-dogs. The description of the Cornish miners shows what might be made, with a little care, of this class; but, unfortunately, in a great majority of cases, this care has never been extended. They have been utterly neglected by the government, the church, and the upper classes, and the consequence is, that they are, generally speaking, ignorant and uncivilised, and too often debauched and profligate. In some extreme cases, the rapid accumulation of population in particular points, without the slightest attempt at provision for their spiritual wants, or slightest regard for their moral conduct on the part of those who were making colossal fortunes out of their labour, has led to results scarcely less deplorable than those which have been produced under the operation of similar causes in the great foci of manufac-

* Report of Children's Employment Commission in Mines and Collieries, Appendix, p. 40.

† Ibid. p. 515. ‡ Ibid. p. 537.

§ See Reports of T. Tancred, Esq., and J. H. Franks, Esq., ibid. pp. 311, 379. Mr. Tancred observes "that the greatest contrast is observable in some parts of the country where the workmen are *hired by the year*, as in the Duke of Portland's collieries, and others in the valley of the Irvine, in Ayrshire."—p. 314.

turing industry. The following account, taken from the report of T. Tancred, Esq., on the Collieries and Iron Works in the west of Scotland, will establish this position, and serve as another illustration of the fundamental truth, which can never be too frequently or too forcibly impressed on our minds, that *increase of wealth is not necessarily increase of happiness; and that avarice, or, as it is now christened, accumulation of capital, when it gets an undue ascendency over moral consideration, invariably produces misery.*

Most of our readers will have heard of the invention of the hot-blast, or use of heated air instead of cold air, in the smelting of iron. In Macculloch's Statistical Account of the British Empire, a splendid picture is given of the rapid extension anticipated for the iron-trade of the west of Scotland, in consequence of this improvement. This anticipation has been more than realised. In June, 1835, there were 29 furnaces in blast in Scotland; in May, 1841, there were 68 in blast and 10 building. Properties, worth a few years ago only a few hundreds a-year, now yield the proprietor upwards of 12,000*l.* annually. The population of the two parishes of Old and New Monkland, where the most important of these works are situated, has increased from 19,447 in 1831, to 40,193 in 1841.

So much for the *economical* results;—now for the reverse side of the picture:—

"At Coatbridge, where a large portion of this population has been located within the last ten years, no church or clergyman has been supplied till very recently, chiefly at the expense of *one* out of the numerous employers of labour in the district. These efforts came, of course, too late, as must always be the case so long as things of this importance are left to accident and chance. In the mean time a population has grown up, immersed more deeply than any I have met with in the disgusting habits of debauchery. . . . Everything that meets the eye or ear tells of slavish labour united to brutal intemperance. . . . The population consists almost exclusively of colliers and iron-workers, with no gentry or middle-class beyond a few managers of works or their clerks. I visited many of the houses attached to some of the works, and usually found them in a most neglected state, bespeaking an absence of all domestic comfort and attention to social duties. The garden-ground usually lay a mere waste unenclosed, and not a spade put into it: the children, in rags and filth, were allowed to corrupt each other, exempt from all the restraints of school or domestic control. This domestic discomfort seemed attributable, amongst other causes, to the crowded state of the habitations, which, from the want of buildings to contain the rapidly increasing population, were filled with lodgers. I was assured that some houses, with a family and only two rooms, took in as many as fourteen single men as lodgers. It is needless to observe how impossible it must be for a woman to preserve decency, cleanliness, or comfort, under such circumstances. An infatuated love of money, for no purpose but to minister to a degrading passion for ardent spirits, seems the all-pervading motive for action in this quarter. I was informed that almost universally, the higher the wages the greater the discomfort in which the workmen lived, and the sooner, upon the least illness or other cessation of wages, they became destitute. In short their moral condition, or their state of civilisation, is such as to incapacitate them from making a right use of their money."

Nearly a similar state of things is described by Mr. Tremen-

hure, in his Report on the State of Education in the Mining District of South Wales, which was the scene of the chartist insurrection in November, 1839. Here also the population has been allowed to accumulate in dense masses without any provision for their moral or physical well-being, and the inevitable results of such a course have shown themselves in the shape of heathen ignorance, reckless improvidence, drunkenness, immorality, and insubordination. These are extreme cases; throughout the whole mining population, however, with the exception of the better portion of the Cornish miners, and a few instances in the other districts where the proprietors of the mines have done their duty; we find the same complaint repeated, that the moral and intellectual condition of the miners is very inferior to their physical. In fact, that they are a rude uncivilised race, deplorably ignorant in all that constitutes religious instruction and education, and, consequently, deficient in the foresight, economy and self-restraint, which would enable to turn their advantageous situation, in regard to pecuniary earnings, to a good account. Still, when we compare their situation with that of the great body of agricultural and manufacturing labourers, there is a manifest advantage. The first condition of the moral elevation, viz.—a physical state of tolerable comfort and certainty, is here given, and the problem is comparatively easy. In fact, little more than a legislative prohibition of the flagrant abuses respecting female and infant labour which have prevailed in particular districts; a better provision for education, and for building and sewerage; and, above all, such a moral reform in public opinion as would render it disgraceful for the wealthy proprietor and capitalist to take no charge of the moral welfare of those by whose labour his fortune is amassed, appears necessary, in order to make the mining population of Britain all that the sober and reasonable philanthropist has a right to expect.

Along with the miners may be classed another considerable body of the working population—viz., those employed in fisheries. The number of men and boys employed in fishing-boats in Scotland in 1840, was 52,047, or, with those employed on shore, 88,701. No official data exist to give the number in England, but the whole number of hands employed in the British fisheries is estimated, by statistical writers, at nearly 220,000 on the sea, and at least 100,000 on shore. Deducting 80,000 for Ireland, this would give, at least, 200,000 men and boys, representing a population of 700,000 or 800,000 persons dependent on the fisheries.*

* In many districts, especially in the north and west of Scotland, the pursuit of fishing is combined with agriculture, and the fisherman has a little farm of two or three acres. Still he is mainly dependent on the fisheries, and almost invariably pays his rent out of the produce of the sea.

The evidence collected by the Commissioners on the Irish Fisheries* in 1837, enables us to form a pretty correct estimate as to the condition of this class, which, on the whole, is satisfactory. The great bulk of the fishing population are not mere day labourers, but possess considerable property. The herring boats on the east coast of Scotland, with their drift of nets, are worth from 100*l.* to 200*l.*, and are generally owned in shares by three or four men, who navigate her with the assistance of a hired hand or two. The average earnings of such a boat in the herring season, which lasts for six or eight weeks, have been ascertained, in a series of years, to be about 70*l.*† We are told in the report "they live in slated cottages, having two or three rooms, and very comfortable;" that "they realise more money than other classes of labour;" and that "they are fully as comfortable, or more so, than any artisan or agricultural labourer, though their means are more precarious.‡ This applies to the east coast of Scotland generally, and to the Orkneys; and although there is no direct evidence as to the state of the fishermen on the east coast of England, there can be no doubt, from the superior size and construction of their boats, that they have more property, and are generally in a superior condition to the Scotch fishermen. In Cornwall we are told that "the social condition of the fishermen is about on a par with that of working tradesmen and manufacturers, and is sometimes superior to that of the agricultural population;"§ and in the Isle of Man that "they are comfortable, and have no appearance of poverty."‖ In Shetland, and some parts of the Hebrides, the condition of the fishing population is much worse, and extreme poverty prevails;¶ but, on the whole, on the western coast of Scotland they are described as "decidedly more comfortable than agricultural labourers," and, in some cases, as "quite as well off as tradesmen, or even better."**

The economical condition of the fishing population, therefore, fully bears out the assertion, that the possession of property, or of some interest in property, is essential to preserve the common

* See Report of Irish Fishery Commission, Appendix.
† Ibid., p. 255.
‡ Ibid., p. 254.
§ Ibid., p. 240.
‖ Ibid., p. 255.
¶ In Shetland, the poverty of the fishing population may be ascribed to the system of serfage, by which the tenantry are all bound to fish for their landlords at a fixed rate, much below the market value, which has had the double effect of discouraging enterprise and industry, and of converting the kindly relations between tenant and landlord into those between a griping speculator in fish and his needy customers. In the Hebrides the poverty is owing to the general distress of the population, consequent on the failure of kelp and the introduction of sheep-farming, and to the desertion by the herrings of their usual haunts.
** See Report of Irish Fishery Commission, p. 256.

unskilled labourer from falling into the condition of a piece of machinery, bought at the *minimum* market price at which it can be produced—that is to say, at which labourers can be got to exist and propagate their species—to which he is invariably reduced sooner or later, when the interests of capital and labour are quite distinct, and are left to adjust themselves under the sole operation of the law of supply and demand.

Of the moral condition of the fishing population we hear no complaints, except that they are frequently improvident, and prone to habits of intoxication. In many parts of Scotland they are decidedly a superior race of men—intelligent, religious, and well conducted;* and, on the whole, there seems no reason to assign them a lower grade than that of the best description of agricutural labourers, small farmers, and tradesmen and artizans in villages and country towns.

The number of seamen employed in navigating British vessels on the 1st of January, 1841, was 160,509, representing, with their families, a considerable population. Their condition may be called good, in comparison with that of the bulk of the manufacturing and agricultural population, the usual rate of wages being 3*l.* a month, in addition to subsistence, and employment tolerably certain. The proverbial carelessness, however, of the seaman's character, and the temptations to which they are exposed during the intervals of employment in large towns, too frequently reduce them and their families to poverty, and leave them without a provision when disabled by age or accident. The loss of life by shipwreck, also, is continually reducing widows and orphans to destitution, and is a constant means of recruiting the mass of extreme misery and suffering in large towns, where, as in Scotland, no legal provision for relief exists in the maritime parishes.

The seafaring class have also their peculiar grievances, resulting from vicious legislation, or want of legislation, among which it will be sufficient to allude to two of the most prominent—viz., the alleged mal-administration of the fund to which all merchant seamen are compelled to contribute, and the legal iniquity by which, in the event of shipwreck, all claim on wages for the voyage is at an end. Any partial abuses of this description we may hope, in the present improved tone of feeling in the Legislature, to see speedily redressed; but, as regards the general elevation of the seafaring class, it is evident that we must look to the slow and indirect effects of improved means of education and religious instruction among the class from whom they are drawn, seconding the efforts of individual zeal and charity, and introducing habits of temperance, respectability, and moral restraint.

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* Personal knowledge.

The bargemen and boatmen employed on canals, and in the inland navigation of the country, constitute another distinct portion of the labouring class, concerning whose character and mode of life we have full information in the evidence recently given before the select committee of the House of Lords for inquiry into the practice of Sunday travelling upon canals and navigable rivers. The physical condition of these men is decidedly superior to that of the common class of agricultural labourers, the usual rate of wages being about 17*s.* to 20*s.* a week for men, and 7*s.* for boys. Their moral condition is, however, as a general rule, so low as to render it a matter of surprise that such a state of things can exist in a Christian country. A large proportion of them live and die in a state of heathen ignorance, without having heard even the faintest tradition of a God or a Saviour.* Their habits and language are those of brutal and hardened profligacy, and they furnish a large proportion of the most atrocious offences in the criminal calendar. This extreme demoralisation may clearly be traced to the practice of working on Sundays, a practice which has originated in the greed for lucre, and criminal neglect of those whose duty it was to enforce the fundamental rule of every Christian country—the observance of the sabbath as a day of rest from ordinary labour,† but which it is now impossible for individual car-

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* Sir G. Chetwynd states in his evidence with regard to one man (Ellis), who was capitally convicted on a most atrocious case of rape and murder, that he was twenty-five years of age, and had never been in any place of worship whatever, until he was committed. He was uneducated, not having the least idea of a God, or a Saviour, or a future state—in short, having no idea of religion whatever until he came to Stafford gaol. Sir G. Chetwynd adds, "I believe there are a great many boatmen in a similar situation;" and that "Ellis has made such disclosures since he has been in Stafford gaol, as beggar all description of the abominations that are committed on canals, and their pilfering, and habits of horrid depravity."—*Report* p. 4.

The Rev. J. Davies states that "he once addressed fifty boatmen in a warehouse at Preston Brook, and was credibly informed that not one of those men had been in a place of worship for twenty or thirty years." He tells an affecting anecdote of a poor dying man who, on being visited by a clergyman, and hearing for the first time the name of Jesus Christ, listened with the most eager attention, and put this remarkable question—"You do not mean to say that the Saviour died for poor bargemen?"—*Report* p. 69.

† In the case of canals, the labour is, strictly speaking, *ordinary* labour, consisting in the conveyance of goods and merchandise. The transport of *passengers and mails* on Sunday by railway, stands on quite a different footing. Railways having, to a great extent, superseded the old modes of conveyance by the turnpike roads, it would be impossible to close them against the public on the Sunday, unless we were prepared to assert universally the *Jewish* prineiple, that no work whatever is to be done on the Lord's day, in place of that universally adopted by *Christian* nations, which only requires the suspension of regular and ordinary week-day labour. Moreover, the amount of Sunday traffic required for the public accommodation on railways can always be conducted without obliging any one servant, or class of servants, to an *habitual* disregard of religious observances.

riers to break through, however earnestly they may desire it, without the assistance of the Legislature.* That this assistance will be afforded, and the system of Sunday trading put a stop to, we cannot doubt, and the evidence is decisive that this alone will be sufficient, in a short time, to effect a considerable moral improvement, and raise the general character of the boatmen to the standard of those particular classes (such as the Severn bargemen, some of those on the Bridgewater canals and others), among whom the demoralising practice of habitual Sunday labour has not been introduced, which appears to be at least on a level with that of the better class of rural labourers.

The navigators, as they are called, who are employed in the construction of canals, railways, and similar undertakings, are, as a class, something similar to the bargemen. Roaming from place to place, without a settled home, under no moral restraint or superintendence, in the prime of life and physical vigour, and earning high wages by great exertions, they are, for the most part, a reckless and dissipated set, rude and brutal in their habits, and destitute of instruction.† The same objectionable practices of habitual labour on the Sunday, in order to urge forward the completion of railways, has also been, in some cases, an additional, agent of demoralisation.

The class of men employed as engine-drivers, guards, &c., upon railways, are very superior. The pay is high, and respectability and sobriety are essential requisites. Praiseworthy exertions have also been made by several of the leading companies to provide the means of religious instruction and education, and to promote the comfort, respectability, and moral improvement of those in their employment.‡

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* See evidence of Mr. Baxendale, of the firm of Pickford and Co. *Report*, p. 109.

† See Appendix B. to Eighth Annual Poor-law Report, p. 140.

‡ The London and Birmingham Company have devoted 1000*l.* to the erection of a church at Wolverton, the central station on the line, where a population of nearly 800 persons connected with the railway is collected. Schools, reading-rooms, and dressing-rooms, for the engine-men, and other useful institutions, have also been set on foot. The Great Western, Grand Junction, and other great companies, have not been behindhand in following the example set by the London and Birmingham, and the result is one of the most satisfactory instances of the joint working of capital and labour which can be pointed out. In the case of the London and Birmingham Railway, it is a remarkable and gratifying fact that a dissenter moved the grant for erecting a church belonging to the establishment.

CHAPTER VI.

CONDITION OF CLASSES SUPERIOR TO COMMON LABOURERS.—GENERAL VIEW OF SOCIETY IN GREAT BRITAIN.

RISING above the class of common labourers, we come to the great class who in the population returns are described as "employed in retail trade or in handicraft, as masters or workmen." This includes shopkeepers and tradesmen of every description, and all the superior descriptions of workmen, such as carpenters, shoemakers, &c., who exercise what is strictly speaking a handicraft, in contradistinction to common brute labour, and to labour which is mechanical, or a mere link in the operations of a great machine. This is, next to the class of agricultural labourers, the most numerous single class in the kingdom, including, according to the returns of 1831, 1,159,867 males above 20 years of age, or nearly one-fifth of the whole number of males of that age, and consequently representing a fifth of the total population. This class, with the addition of the class of farmers, or agricultural occupiers employing labourers, who number 187,075 males above 20, and of a few of the best paid and most respectable operatives belonging to the manufacturing and other classes, constitute what may be called the great middle class of the country.* It is notorious that a great part of the enormous wealth of the nation is centered in this class, and that there is no country in Europe where the corresponding class is so large in proportion to the population, or, on the whole, so well off in physical condition and in political and social importance. Whatever evils affect this class are rather moral; such as intemperance, want of education, irreligion or sectarian fanaticism, indifference to the claims and sufferings of the poor, too absorbing a pursuit of money, and the like, than physical and immediate. The same may be said with still more truth of the aristocracy, or class of capitalists, proprie-

* The lower members of this class, such as the bricklayers, masons, &c., hardly come within the denomination of the middle class. The whole division of handicraft or skilled labour occupies an intermediate position between the common labouring class and that of retail dealers, &c. The wages of every description of handicraft are generally good. The following statement shows those paid at two different periods to workmen employed at Greenwich Hospital:—

"The weekly wages paid in 1817 to carpenters were 31*s.*, to bricklayers 30*s.* 6*d.*, to masons 31*s.* 6*d.*; in 1835 carpenters were paid 32*s.* 6*d.*, bricklayers 28s., and masons 31*s.* 6*d.*"—*Official Returns from Greenwich Hospital.*

These are above the average rate of wages in the country for common handicraft, which, however, may be stated at from 14*s.* to 40*s.*, with employment, on the average, for eleven months in the year. See Journal of Statistical Society, vol. ii., p. 422; Porter's Progress of the Nation, sec. iii., p. 251.

tors, and professional educated men, who occupy the summit of society. They are beyond all comparison the most wealthy and powerful aristocracy in the world; and if the distress which results from diminished rents and profits, or from increased taxation, affected them only, their case might be left to the moralist and religious teacher, with a moderate allowance of pity for the, comparatively speaking, handful of individuals who might find their comforts abridged or their importance diminished. This, however, is not the case; the interests of all classes of the community are indissolubly linked together, and the *moral* causes and remedies which are incalculably the most important in the destruction and renovation of nations, depend mainly on the small number of educated and thinking men. In treating, therefore, of the direct, urgent, and positive evils which threaten the mass of the poorer classes and common labouring population, we shall have to touch incidentally on many of the moral and economical questions which effect the more elevated classes and society in general.

Before commencing this task we shall avail ourselves of the position which we have attained, to sum up, in a few words, the results to which we have arrived in the course of our inquiries, as to the actual composition and condition of society, and the amount and nature of the evils which call so loudly for a remedy.

To borrow a simile from geology, we may say that modern society in England consists of three great formations—the upper or gentleman class, the middle class, and the lower or common labouring class. As in geology, each of these great formations is subdivided into several distinct beds or strata, which graduate into each other, so that it is impossible to draw an exact line, and yet which are distinguishable enough for practical purposes. The same may be said of the formations or classes themselves, which are not separated, as in some countries of the continent, by rigid and immutable barriers, but are gradually shaded off into each other, and overlap, as it were, at the point of junction, though still sufficiently distinct for a rough practical approximation.

To begin with the upper class: this includes—1st, the hereditary nobility; 2d, the landed gentry; 3d, the class of capitalists, bankers, and monied men; 4th, the professions; and 5th, a few literary men, artists, and select members of occupations, usually ranked with an inferior class. The whole number of males above 20 years of age, included under the general denomination of "capitalists, bankers, professional, and other educated men," according to the census of 1831, did not exceed 214,390, which would give a proportion of about 1-20th of the total population. A few persons of independent fortune may be included under the head of persons who have no employment, but the number is very limited. In fact, the number of opulent persons, or persons in independent circumstances, is incredibly small. The returns of the income-

tax in 1812 showed in Great Britain only 22,000 persons with an income from 200*l.* to 1000*l.*; 3000 with 1000*l.* to 5000*l.*; 600 with above 5000*l.*; or only 25,600 persons with an income above 200*l.* a year. The returns of the national debt for the year 1839, show that out of 280,869 persons entitled to dividends, only 4523 receive between 200*l.* and 300*l.* per annum; 2759 receive 300*l.* to 500*l.*; 1337 receive 500*l.* to 1000*l.*; 384 receive 1000*l.* to 2000*l.*; and 192 receive sums exceeding 2000*l.*

The total number of landed proprietors in Scotland, among whom a rental of 5,000,000*l.* is divided, has been estimated at about 7800, of whom more than 6,000 have properties worth less than 600*l.* a year.* If the same proportion of large proprietors to rental was preserved in England, it would give about 10,000 proprietors with incomes exceeding 600*l.* a year; but the proportion is estimated by Macculloch to be lower, owing to the prevalence of entails in Scotland. Additional evidence of the exceedingly small number of wealthy persons is furnished by the returns of the assessed taxes, which show only 26,861 private four-wheeled carriages, 108,090 male servants, and 32,404 persons charged for armorial bearings.

On the whole, we believe that we shall not be very far from the mark in estimating the number of males above twenty years of age, belonging to the capitalists, professional, and other subdivisions of the genteel class, at about 250,000, of whom one-fifth may be in easy circumstances, and one-tenth opulent. This would give a proportion of about one-twentieth of the whole population belonging to the upper or genteel class, and 1-200dth to the aristocracy of rank and wealth.

The middle class includes—first, the members of the lower branches of the professions, literature, commerce, &c., who form a sort of transition class between this and the upper; secondly, shopkeepers and retail tradesmen of every description; thirdly, farmers; fourthly, skilled artisans and handicraftsmen of a superior description; fifthly, common handicraftsmen, or men living by the exercise of a craft which requires some apprenticeship, and commands wages decidedly superior to those of common labour. The latter class is a transition one between the middle and labouring classes, and perhaps approximates, *de facto*, more to the latter in education, feelings, and habits of life; still, however, we have preferred including it under the denomination of the middle class, since there is no physical or moral obstacle to its attaining as high a standard of civilisation in every respect as the class of small shopkeepers and retail dealers. Including these different subdivisions, we have seen reason to believe

* General Report of Scotland, vol. iii., app. p. 4.

that the middle class of Great Britain may amount to between one-fourth and one-fifth of the whole population.

The labouring class consists of the following divisions, whose numbers and proportions to the whole population are calculated on the returns of 1831, and the data already given :—

	Proportion to total population.	Total numbers at present.
Agricultural labouring population	1-3.7	5,000,000
Manufacturing ditto	1-6.6	2,800,000
Mining, fishing, and labour not agricultural	1-6.6	2,800,000
Servants, &c.	1-3.7	500,000*
Total of population dependent on ordinary labour		11,300,000

Adding to this 1,000,000 for the genteel population, and 4,650,000 being the highest estimate for the middle class population, we have about 17,000,000, leaving, in round numbers, a residue of about 1,500,000 unaccounted for. We have already seen that 1,300,000 persons are included in the list of official paupers for 1841. Of these, however, a large proportion will be included in the population returns, under the head of agricultural and other descriptions of labourers and their families. In fact, the only classes of paupers who will not have been enumerated as labourers will be ; first, those receiving out-door relief who are totally unable to work ; secondly, widows, deserted wives, &c., and their families ; thirdly, a majority of those receiving in-door relief. The numbers of these classes respectively are stated† at 170.069 ; 165,267, and 159,118, which would give a total of paupers not included in the enumeration of labourers, of about half-a-million. This would leave a residue of about a million for the criminal, vagrant, and destitute population, of whose existence, as a *Pariah Caste*, in the large towns and manufacturing districts, we have seen so many proofs.‡

These are, of course, very rough estimates, and are given without any pretensions to scientific accuracy. In fact, we should have preferred to avoid even the appearance of a parade of figures

* The number of male servants of every description is 144,188 ; of female servants 670,491 ; total 814,679 ; but the bulk of female servants are already included in the families of agricultural and other labourers ; and male servants are generally unmarried. Throughout the whole of this estimate we have endeavoured to keep on the safe side, and rather overrate than underrate the numbers depending on regular industry.

† Report of Poor-law Commissioners, 1842, app. p. 350.

‡ This estimate will, probably, appear below the mark, when we reflect on the evidence adduced in the Sanitary Reports, &c., as to the state of the population in large towns, and consider that one-third of the total population of Great Britain, or upwards of 6,000,000 of persons, live in towns having a population of upwards of 10,000. In Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, &c., we have distinct evidence that *considerably more than a sixth of the adult population* have no regular and recognised means of subsistence.

and statistical research, had it been possible without it to convey to the minds of our readers the conviction which patient and disinterested inquiry has forced upon our own, that an immense mass of population, probably not much less than the amount of official pauperism, exists in a condition distinctly lower than that of the lowest class of labourers who live by any regular and recognised industry. We feel satisfied that if we were to estimate the class who are below the lowest independent labourer, including paupers receiving relief, criminals, prostitutes, vagrants, and poor living mainly on private charity, at 2,000,000, we should be far under the mark, and that 2,500,000, or between 1-7th and 1-8th of the total population, is much more likely to be a correct estimate.* We are satisfied also that the number has been, and is, frightfully on the increase.

This is the first great evil in our present social condition.

The next is, that a large proportion of the independent labouring class, including the bulk of the manufacturing and agricultural population, are in such a position as to be unable to support themselves in tolerable decency and comfort by their labour, and to make any provision against illness, old age, suspension of employment, or any of the other numerous accidents which may at any time merge them in the class of paupers or destitute.

The third evil is, that even among the class of operatives, whose pecuniary earnings are sufficient for their support, various demoralising causes exist, such as female and infant labour, want of education and religious instruction, intemperance, and the like, which tend to depress their condition, and in many cases to degrade them to a level with those who constantly suffer the pressure of physical want.

The fourth and last great evil is, that all the preceding evils are apparently on the increase under the operation of deep-seated causes, which almost assume the appearance of necessary laws, and that, in addition to this, certain temporary causes have produced a very great and decided aggravation of the first and se-

* If we include all those who would habitually feel the pangs of hunger and cold, if they had no other resource than the earnings of lawful industry, and who subsist, wholly or in part, by the earnings of crime, or by public or private charity, in the latter case principally by the charity of those of their own rank of life, we feel convinced that 3,000,000, or one-sixth of the population, would not be over the mark. In Ireland the proportion would be nearer one-third, which would give for the whole empire an average of more than one-fifth of the population *unable to live by lawful industry*. Of these, a very small proportion are professional criminals, probably not above 100,000 regular thieves, and as many prostitutes, but many more eke out the insufficient wages of labour by occasional pilfering and prostitution, especially the latter, and a still larger proportion are only able to exist by occasional charity from those one step above them in the social scale. These, it must be remembered, are exclusive of the 1,300,000 paupers who receive legal relief.

cond evils within the last few years, and especially during the last twelvemonth.*

These are formidable evils, whose existence can neither be denied nor palliated. It would be easy to swell the catalogue, for undoubtedly where such wide-spread physical evils exist among the lower orders, corresponding moral evils must exist among the more elevated classes. It would be easy to draw a picture which should represent the whole system of society from top to bottom as thoroughly rotten: the aristocracy selfish, profligate, short-sighted, utterly insensible to the duties of their exalted station; the educated and capitalist classes incurably affected with the errors of a barren and heartless utilitarian philosophy, and devoted soul and body to the worship of money, fashion, power, social influence, and other idols of Mammon; the middle classes equally utilitarian, equally worshippers of Mammon, equally insensible to the moral claims of their humbler brethren, and, in addition, narrow-minded, full of cant and prejudices, and actuated by peddling selfish chicane and sectarian jealousies; the better class of artisans and well-paid workmen mutinous, discontented, ignorant, irreligious, intemperate; the mass of the labouring population exasperated or stupified by misery. Such a picture might easily be drawn by one inclined to misanthropical or desponding views, or prejudiced against the existing order of things, and every trait of it might be literally true. And yet it would not be the *whole truth:* it would not convey a faithful picture of English society. By the side of the enormous evils which we have pointed out, the impartial observer must admit that there are immense resources, immense elements of good. If it be true that some members of the aristocracy are selfish, short-sighted, and forgetful of their duties, it is no less true that others are moral, religious, kind-hearted, well-intentioned, and ready to co-operate in any scheme that may be pointed out for the public benefit. It is true also, that as a body, they are not, like the nobles of old Rome and France, effete and degenerate, but full of vigour, energy, courage, and genuine manhood. The same is true also, in a remarkable degree, of the educated and professional classes. With all their faults, the character of the "English gentleman" is one of which their country is, with reason, proud: no nation of Europe or of the world can produce a body of men whose character stand so high for truthfulness, honourable feeling, calm and unassuming self-respect, energy, intelligence, and all the splendid qualities which are con-

* Written in 1842. On reviewing this chapter in 1844, it appears possible that the excitement arising from the urgent and progressive distress which existed at the former period, may have led us somewhat to overstate the case as applicable to the present, or to the ordinary and average circumstances of the country. The reader will not fail to make the requisite allowance for the alteration of circumstances.

veyed by the common acceptation of the term "a thorough gentleman." Of the middle classes, again, it cannot in justice be denied, that there is, in this class, a great fund of real moral and religious feeling, honesty, sagacity, good sense—all, in short, that is conveyed by the best meaning of the word "respectability," including in the term a high standard of the true material civilisation which is founded on domestic comfort. Nor can it be denied, that among the labouring classes generally, down to the verge where poverty and want exercise a demoralizing influence, the same qualities prevail in a greater or less degree, and that, even where the intellectual instruction is very deficient, we find a sturdy common sense, a rugged independence, a practical energy and intelligence, a silent persevering hardihood, and innate attachment to order and fair play, so generally diffused as to constitute by general consent the most marked and striking features of the national character.*

All this we admit cheerfully, and therefore with the strongest feeling of the magnitude and intensity of the counterbalancing evils, and of the imperative necessity of doing something effectual to arrest their progress, we are far from wishing it to be supposed that the case is desperate. It is not for any man to say positively that the evils of which we complain are not inherent in the very nature and constitution of English society, and that nothing short of a complete social revolution will suffice to repress them. But it is quite feasible to make the attempt to cure them, without any fundamental change in the existing order of things; and as long as such an attempt is at all feasible, it is our duty to make it, rather than to sit down in idle despondency, or to launch out in revolutionary changes. On the whole, our view of society is, that we are in a position in which the elements of good and evil, of misery and opulence, of degradation and civilization, are struggling for the ascendancy, and great sacrifices and efforts are necessary on the part of those who are interested in the ascendancy of the good. With such sacrifices there is no reason to despair: without them, it is evident that all the speechifying, legislation, party struggles, and plausible professions in the world, will not save us.

* On reviewing this, it strikes me that I may have expressed myself in a way hardly calculated to do justice to the high opinion I entertain of the talent, energy, and intellectual activity existing among the working classes. I am satisfied that the working classes, taken collectively, have made immense intellectual progress during the last few years, and that many of the best heads and soundest hearts in the country are to be found among the men who live by daily labour. I would gladly refer the sceptical reader to the Poems and Life of Robert Nicoll, a poor Scotch herd-boy, who fought his way up to be the editor of a Radical newspaper at Leeds, where he died a few years ago at an early age; or to the work of Hugh Millar, the quarryman and geologist, on the Old Red Sandstone, as proofs of the genuine worth of character and high degree of culture that may be found among the common working men of the present day. It is in the existence of such men that I place my hope, much more than in anything that can be done by political changes or legislation.

PART II.

CAUSES OF EXISTING DISTRESS.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL VIEWS—MODERN THEORIES OF SOCIETY—EFFECT AND PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE OF MORAL CAUSES.

THE description which we have given of the nature and extent of the evils under which society is now suffering in England, suggests, in many instances, a view of the causes which have been most active in producing them. These causes we shall now endeavour to represent in a more comprehensive and systematic manner. In doing so, it is difficult to draw the line between too much and too little abstract speculation and generalization. On the one hand, we must remember that the most important object of a practical essay is to suggest immediate and practical remedies for immediate and practical evils. On the other, that practice is, to a great extent, founded upon theory; that the material and outward life of a nation or society, as of an individual, springs out of and reflects its inward spiritual life; and that an inquiry which takes no account of causes that are not immediate and palpable, is not only incomplete, but positively false and untrue. It is altogether a false representation of society to figure it as a dead machine, acted on only *en masse* by government, institutions, legislation, and other ponderable and measurable forces. It is a *living* mass, held together by inappreciable *atomic* forces. The good deeds of individuals, every act of duty, every act of charity, nay, every kind look, and expression, however trifling, of goodwill and brotherhood between man and man, are the attractive forces.—Every harsh, unjust, cruel, selfish deed, again, is a repulsive force. The man who does his duty in his appointed station is the true Conservative; the man who fails to do that duty, the true Destructive, however they may nickname one another in the evanescent strife of party politics. The nation, the society, where the attractive forces clearly preponderate, will form a happy and con-

tented whole, in spite of much erroneous legislation and false political economy. It is like the healthy constitution which can throw off a thousand irregularities, each sufficient to lay the invalid on a bed of sickness. The nation, again, where the repulsive forces are in excess, is perpetually on the brink of a revolution. An accident, the calling together of a states-general, the taking of a Bastile, may apply the torch, and in a moment the combustible elements will blaze sky-high, shattering the whole frame-work of society into atoms with the volcanic explosion. The dissolution of the Roman Empire and the French Revolution are terrible moral lessons, where we may read the stern inevitable fate of societies which gave themselves over to practical atheism; that is, to practical oblivion and disregard of the duties and considerations that spring from the existence of a spiritual and unseen world.

The neglect of these obvious considerations, and the attempt to attain a degree of scientific precision and rigour, unattainable in the infinitely complex affairs of man and society, appear to be the reason why the modern science of political economy has led to such unsatisfactory results. Since the time of Adam Smith, who, although, perhaps, too much identified with the utilitarian tendency of his age, was far too great a philosopher to be a pedant, political economy in England has taken an exclusively abstract direction. It has become too much an attempt to construct a rigorous scientific theory of man and society, considered with reference to a single object only—the production of wealth. The assumption has been virtually made, that, as in mathematical researches concerning the mutual relations of a system of gravitating bodies, you may abstract all considerations of colour, light, heat, and other qualities, so, in inquiries concerning the practical material interests of society, you may abstract all considerations of religion, patriotism, imagination, and the innumerable spiritual influences that make up the complex creature man, and may treat him simply as a wealth-producing and wealth-consuming unit, actuated by given, constant, and appreciable forces of self-interest. The variations from this definition, it is said, though often considerable in the individual, correct one another in the aggregate, and may be safely neglected. The problem, therefore, which political economy has proposed to itself, may be thus stated:—How to adjust a society composed of an aggregate of such units, so that their joint action may give as the result *the maximum production of national wealth*; this being everywhere tacitly assumed to be identical with the *maximum material happiness, or practical well-being, of society*.

By the solution of this problem it was hoped to make the greater part of the evils disappear that had afflicted society in consequence of the ignorance, on the parts of governments and individuals, of the true principles of national wealth, and to re-

alise a sort of millenium of national prosperity, by the diffusion of sound theories of capital, wages, rent, labour, population, and the like. Without undervaluing the researches of Malthus, Ricardo, and other distinguished modern economists, many of which are most important, and which can never be safely left out of account altogether by the statesman or philosopher who would investigate the social questions of the day, we may be allowed to say that, pushed to the extent to which we have seen it carried, the *principle* on which these researches were based was fundamentally false. How, in fact, does it differ from the *practical atheism* which, in a different form, shocks us in the writings of the French Encyclopedists, to *assume*, as has been virtually done, that the most important interests of society may be adjusted without any reference whatever to moral considerations? The result at which political economists have arrived, with a uniformity which, considering the different paths by which they have travelled, might appear very surprising, did we not consider that it is the necessary consequence of the abstract and mathematical nature of their definitions and reasonings, is simply this —that the true solution of the problem of national wealth is to be found in the systematic application of the principle of *laisser-faire;* in other words, of leaving things to adjust themselves by the free unimpeded operation of the individual self-interests involved. All interference on the part of legislation or public opinion, and especially all interference founded upon moral considerations, is stigmatised as erroneous. Thus, for the complaints of industry and commerce, political economy has had but one specific—absence of restraint, unlimited freedom of competition. For the still more important question of wages it has the same answer. Are wages insufficient? There can be but one reason—the supply is too great for the demand; there can be but one remedy—to diminish the supply by diminishing the population—to increase the demand by increasing capital. But how to diminish population? Here comes in the last and terrible application of the principle of *laisser-faire,* as developed in the writings of Malthus. By *letting things alone;* by letting poverty, and misery, and crime, do their appointed work; and abstaining from aggravating the evil, by a weak and criminal attempt to interpose *public* or *private charity* between the stern decrees of an overruling necessity and its destined victims. This is the conclusion drawn, with the rigour of a mathematical demonstration from the data and method of reasoning *assumed* by Malthus in common with a great majority of the most distinguished writers who have treated of the condition of the poorer classes.

From these conclusions it is scarcely necessary to say we dissent entirely. In fact, experience has shown with a force of demonstration that renders arguments superfluous, that something far more than *leaving things to themselves* is required to meet the

evils which threaten society, and that most of the conclusions which have been taught by political economy with a pedantic parade of scientific certainty, are either totally false, or if true, true only under certain conditions and limitations. For instance, the fundamental axiom that increase of national wealth is equivalent to increase of national happiness, has been completely disproved. The more enlightened economists have, indeed themselves come to see, that even on their own principles the mere absolute amount of wealth in a nation signifies little compared with the far more important question of its *distribution*.* In England we have already seen that if amount of national wealth, —nay more, if increase of national wealth in a faster *ratio* than population, were the sole condition of national welfare, that condition is abundantly fulfilled. We have seen, also that so far is this from being true, that the specific evil which is now forcing itself on the attention of all thinking men is, that in England, and in all other states where modern industry is calling vast masses of wealth into existence, as wealth increases, misery, like an inseparable shadow, follows and increases with it, and that the resources of modern science, victorious as they have proved over the material and legislative obstacles which have retarded the progress of wealth, have failed hitherto in providing a remedy for the evils which accumulate in its train.

We dwell on this the more distinctly, because it is our deep conviction that all attempts at explaining the causes of, or providing remedies for, deep-seated and widely-spread social evils, which proceed *exclusively* on economical and mechanical principles, and throw totally out of sight moral considerations, must inevitably lead round in a circle to false and inapplicable results. Holding these views, we think it right to preface our inquiries into the more immediate practical questions to which our attention will be mainly directed in the present essay, by some general statement of the *moral* causes which appear to us to lie at the bottom of the *material* evils which society has to deplore.

Among these, the foremost place must undoubtedly be assigned to the prevalence in modern society of what, for want of a better name, we must designate as Mammon worship; that is, an exclusive and undue regard for wealth, rank, power, and other outward distinctions, with an undue depreciation and neglect of the duties, obligations, and influences of an unseen and spiritual world. The prevalence of this spirit in modern English society is unfortunately a fact too obvious to admit of dispute, or to require demonstration. The very expressions of our common familiar conversation testify to it. A "respectable" man has

* The economical writers of the continent have long since recognised this truth, and abandoned the path pursued by the English school of political economy, as one that leads to false and partial results.

come to signify a man who lives in a manner which denotes the possession of a certain income; a "successful" man means a man who has succeeded in realizing a certain fortune; a "good match" is synonymous with a marriage to a man with handsome means. The practical working faith of most people for the last century seems to be, that to get on in the world and realize a certain amount of money and social position, is the *one thing needful.* The sense of duty, which is in its nature infinite, has resolved itself into a sort of infinite duty of making money. Our whole duty of man is, in the first place, to be rich; or failing this, in the second place, to appear rich. On all hands the gospel is zealously preached and practised, that "poverty is disgraceful, and that hard cash covers a multitude of sins."

Now to the prevalence of this spirit may be directly traced a large portion of the evils of which society complains. For instance, what has been the history of manufacturing England? The inventions of Watt and Arkwright effected an entire revolution in domestic industry. The spinning-wheel was supplanted by the spinning-jenny, the hand-loom by the power-loom, and by the application of capital and machinery on a large scale, enormous additional power was obtained over the products of nature for the use of man. But the power thus obtained was not obtained by the working man; he was a mere link in the machine, helpless without the capitalist who set the gigantic factory in motion. Hence manufacturing society came to be organized on a new footing. Factories sprung up like so many baronial castles, where great cotton or woollen lords reigned supreme over the happiness and welfare of hundreds of retainers. The master manufacturer was placed there by the hand of Providence, as the feudal baron was in days long past, to be the head and leader of a little community whose welfare was, from the nature of the case, entrusted in a great measure to his keeping. How did he fulfil this trust? With some noble exceptions, we may say that the capitalists and master manufacturers of England have not only not fulfilled the trust committed to them in any tolerable degree, but have rather acted with a deep unconsciousness that they had any trust or duty to fulfil beyond that of getting rich as fast as they could. The operatives, by whose labour colossal fortunes were amassed, have been treated too often as if they were not *men*, but *machines;* as if they were part of the raw material which the capitalist was justified in buying in the market at the lowest rate, as if he contracted no obligations towards them in the eyes of God or man, which were not discharged in full by the payment of so many shillings across the counter on a Saturday night. The reports and public documents from which we have quoted, are full of evidence which shows how deep this callous indifference on the part of employers has engrained itself, and what has been the practical

result of the assertion of the principle that men are no longer brothers, children of the same God, held together by moral ties of charity and goodwill; but mechanical units, balanced by a repulsion of mutual self-interests, and held together by the sole bond of money down for value received.*

We do not state these things for the purpose of swelling the clamour which has been raised against the manufacturing interest, as if they alone had bowed the knee to Mammon. On the contrary, we feel that the same remarks are only too applicable to other classes of society. Take, for instance, the landed aristocracy of England, a class who, from their position, were subjected to fewer temptations, and were called upon in an especial manner to set a good example to the community. How have they performed this duty? Let the result answer.† Is it not notorious that the old kindly relations between landlord and tenant, between farmer and labourer, have, to a great extent, disappeared? Has not cash payment come to be the sole bond between man and man in country as well as in town? Do not too many landlords look practically upon their estates as *machines for producing income*? Nay, do they not avow, by the practice of letting their farms at rack-rent to the highest bidder, that all moral considerations of kindness, old connection, and the like, go

* It is sufficient for the present to refer to the evidence on a single point, the working of the factory system. It is established by official evidence, that before the subject attracted the attention of the legislature, and the Factories Regulation Bill came into operation, the following state of things existed:—1. The employment of children below nine years of age was common. 2. The average term of labour was frequently fourteen hours a-day, and was sometimes continued throughout the night, and even for forty hours consecutively, without intermission. 3. This excessive amount of labour was frequently extracted out of the children by severe punishment, inflicted at the discretion of reckless and irresponsible overseers. 4. In a great majority of cases no provision whatever was made for the education of people employed in factories. 5. Nor for the preservation of decency among a promiscuous assemblage of every age and sex. 6. No attempt was made at any moral superintendence over the factory workmen when out of the mill. 7. Nor at providing for those who are thrown out of employment by the want of demand for adult labour, or disabled in the service by accident or illness. See Report of Factory Committee, 1833; Reports of Commission of Inquiry into the Employment of Children, 1833-4; and Annual Reports of Factory Commissioners. See also the recent Report on the State of Children Employed in the Manufacturing Districts in other than Factory Labour, a report which is full of the most interesting and instructive matter, but which, unfortunately, appeared too late to be available for the purposes of this Essay.

† See the evidence already given as to the condition of the agricultural labourer; also the evidence as to the state of heathenism and neglect in which the mining population have been suffered to remain by the great proprietors who were deriving princely incomes from their exertions. In all these cases, however, we wish the reader to bear in mind, that we speak of what has been the general rule hitherto, conscious that there are many bright exceptions, and many reasons for hoping that the observations applicable to the *past* will not apply to the *future*.

simply for nothing? The farmer, again, treated as a money-making machine by the landlord, too often treats the labourer in the same way. Why should he be troubled with old-fashioned hindsmen and cottars? why keep a cow for his labourers' families, or attend to their wants and comforts? Why give employment at harvest-time to the industrious widow or orphan, when times are hard, rents high, and single labourers hired by the week, or Irish reapers paid for the job, are less troublesome and more economical machines. So things had gone on until the Swing riots in 1830 revealed to us, by the light of blazing corn-stacks, that misery and black mutinous discontent smouldered quite as fiercely under the surface of agricultural as of manufacturing England.

Let us not, however, be unjust to the landowners any more than to the millowners. They merely swam with the stream, obeyed the general impulse of society, and acted probably in pretty much the same manner as we ourselves should have done in their situation. The mere fact that the Government and Legislature,—which, in a country blessed with free institutions, must always, to a certain extent, represent public opinion—should have gone on while the population doubled itself, and a series of changes the most momentous for the temporal and spiritual interests of the great labouring class, ran its course, without so much as one serious attempt, until within the last few years, even to ascertain what was going on, much less to provide a remedy for the evils that were accumulating, is a sufficient answer to those who seek to make any *single* class or interest the scape-goat for their own transgressions. It would be too foreign to the object of the present inquiry to attempt to point out the causes which led to this spirit of Mammon worship, and indifference to the claims of duty, becoming so widely diffused throughout all classes of modern English society. It is enough to say that it appears to be no isolated phenomenon, but rather a modification of the general sceptical and irreligious spirit which has characterised the progress of the European mind for the last century. The rapid start of human invention and intelligence, when released by the Reformation from the trammels of superstition and authority, having brought to light a vast mass of new ideas and facts, many of which stood in apparent contradiction with the received forms of belief of former days, and the accredited ministers of religion having failed to reconcile these new truths with old devoutness, and for the most part taken up an hostile attitude towards the intelligence of the age, and made common cause with the corrupt and stupid despotisms which fled hooting from the advance of day, what result could follow but that which we have seen? Religion, identified with cant, narrowness, insincerity, and hostility to truth, became more and more a morbid, unhealthy

sort of thing, oscillating between cold, lukewarm indifference, and narrow, spasmodic supersition.* Philosophy, again, and practical life, divorced from religion, leant more and more towards exact science and material knowledge, and became shallow, irreverent, utilitarian, and selfish. Faith in spiritual things fading away into a faint, half-credible tradition; faith in outward things, and, above all, faith in money, the ultimate representative of all tangible results and material enjoyments, came more and more prominently forward. On the continent of Europe this tendency showed itself in the form of speculative infidelity, active hostility to religion, and decay of reverence and loyalty for old institutions; but with the more practical intellect of England, it took the form which we have described, of indifference to moral influences, and a hard mechanical way of thinking, which would recognise nothing as real which was not tangible and material.

We state these things, because they appear to us to be undoubted *facts*, and to lie at the bottom of the disease of which society complains, but very far from wishing to identify ourselves with those who see nothing but evil in the tendency and spirit of modern society. On the contrary, we feel that with all the drawbacks attending on it, vast progress has been made, and vast conquests have been effected. Like all periods of rapid growth, the present is a transition period, through which we cannot expect to pass without pain and suffering. It is of no use looking back on the past—our business is with the future. No good was ever yet done by wasting time in vain regrets, by kicking against the pricks, and refusing to accept accomplished facts. There is one reasonable course, and one only, for nations and for individuals,—to do the best they can as far as they see their way, and for the rest trust to Providence.

We have also recognised gladly that, notwithstanding the moral obtuseness, cold utilitarian spirit, and unblushing Mammon-worship, which have prevailed so extensively, much of the natural vigour and worth of the national character still remains unimpaired, and that it would be a gross exaggeration to represent any class of the community as hopelessly depraved and degenerate. We also feel that the worst is over, and that a better spirit is abroad on every hand. The callous indifference of the

* This is, of course, not intended to apply to the state of things at the present day, but to that under which the present state of things grew up. No one can fail to recognize a decided reaction and revival of religious zeal of late years. Whatever we may think of the various forms which this reaction has assumed —Evangelicalism, Puseyism, &c.—it is evident that they indicate a state of the public mind widely different from that of the eighteenth century, when the church stood like a dumb ox, tethered down, and so thoroughly tamed, that even David Hume took it under his patronage as a very efficient instrument for keeping people quiet about religion.

wealthy and educated classes is passing away: inquiry is succeeding to neglect, and already a feeling has been created, which is fast swelling into a resistless tide of public opinion, capable, if rightly directed, of producing the most beneficial results. The attention of the legislature, the church, the press, and all the influential classes of the community, is at length fairly awakened to the evils which are preying on society, and to the urgent duty and necessity of making a resolute effort to provide a remedy.

It is the knowledge of such a feeling being abroad that encourages us to proceed in attempting to investigate some of the most prominent economical and physical causes which have been assigned as the *primary* causes of the existing distress, and which, in point of fact, are *secondary* causes aggravating the symptoms which have originated in moral disease.

CHAPTER II.

ECONOMICAL CAUSES OF EXISTING DISTRESS—POPULATION—THEORY OF MALTHUS.

The population of Great Britain has increased at the following rate during the present century:—in 1801 the population was 10,472,048; in 1811 it was 11,964,303, the increase being at the rate of 14·2 per cent; in 1821 it was 14,161,839—increase 17·6 per cent.; in 1831 it was 16,366,011—increase 15.5 per cent.; in 1841 it was 18,664,761—increase 14 per cent. This rate of increase adds 260,000 souls every year to the present population of Great Britain, and is sufficient, if continued at the same rate, to double the population in about fifty years. This is a most important fact, which requires to be considered at the very outset of any inquiry into the causes of existing distress. If, according to the celebrated theory of Malthus, this progressive increase is the consequence of a necessary and irresistible *tendency* on the part of population to increase in a ratio vastly more rapid than the supply of food which the soil can produce; and if this tendency can only be counteracted by the diffusion of a new code of morality on the subject of marriage, and by the exercise on the part of the poorer classes of a degree of prudence, foresight, and disinterested sacrifice of individual happiness for the good of the community, which it is practically quite hopeless to expect from them—or, failing this by the stern pressure of vice, misery, and other physical checks resulting from the want of food—it is as useless to prosecute our inquiries further as it would be to take our stand on the shore of the sea and bid the tide cease to advance. The argument of Malthus may be shortly stated thus:—

He proves, by the example of the United States, and several other instances, that under certain favourable circumstances population has gone on for several generations doubling itself every twenty-five years. He assumes, therefore, an inherent *tendency* in the human race to increase in *geometrical progression* at this rate. On the other hand, he states, with truth, that in a country like England, where all the fertile soil has been long occupied, it is impossible to go on increasing the supply of food for the use of man beyond certain limits. Looking at the average state of the whole earth, he thinks himself warranted in assuming as a self-evident proposition, "that the means of subsistence, under circumstances the most favourable to human industry, could not possibly be made to increase faster than in an *arithmetical ratio*, equal quantities being added every twenty-five years."* Putting these assumptions together, he easily shows that, supposing the two *natural tendencies* to operate undisturbed for a very short time, the increase of population must infallibly bring the world to the verge of starvation. The practical inference which he draws from this conclusion is, that all attempts to improve permanently the condition of the poorer classes, by poor-laws,† by public or private charity,‡ by emigration,§ by a more equal distribution of landed property,‖ by an increased demand for labour,¶ or, in fact, by any means or expedients whatever, except by inducing the poor themselves to exercise a greater degree of *moral restraint*, defined as "abstinence from marriage from prudential motives," are in their very nature fallacious, and defeat themselves.

"If we are really serious in what appears to be the object of such general research, the mode of essentially and permanently bettering the condition of the poor, we must explain to them the true nature of their situation, and show them that the withholding of the supplies of labour is the only possible way of really raising its price; and they themselves being the possessors of this commodity, have alone the power to do this."** And again: "In all old and fully-peopled states it is from this method, *and this alone*, that we can rationally expect any essential and permanent melioration in the condition of the lower classes of people."**

That the working classes of an old and fully-peopled state, where distress already exists, and population presses closely on the means of subsistence, will ever, as a body, be persuaded into adopting the effectual measure of extorting better terms from society by striking work in the population line, and stopping the supplies of labour, is utterly out of the question. However well the *individual* may be convinced that the distress of his *class* arises from

* Malthus on Population, chap. i.
† Ibid. book 3, chap. v.—vii.
‡ Ibid. book 3, chap. v.—vii. Book 4, chap. iii.—x.
§ Ibid. book 3, chap. iv.
‖ Ibid. book 3, chap. ii.
¶ Ibid. book 3, chap. xiv.
** Ibid. book 4, chap. iii.

an over-abundant supply of labour, this will be no inducement to him to abstain from marriage, unless he has some guarantee that his fellow-labourers will do the same.* In each case the individual will act with reference to individual motives, and, unfortunately, there is no fact more certain than that the motives which lead to a rapid increase of population are frequently most powerful precisely among the very classes who *collectively* suffer most by the increase. The fewer the artificial wants, the lower the standard of civilisation and self-respect; the more precarious the situation, the more hopeless the prospect of rising in the world, the greater will be the tendency to early marriage and a rapid increase of population, the less the capability and inducement to exercise any thing in the nature of moral restraint. This is fully established by the instance of Ireland. Here we have a rate of increase unparalleled in the history of an agricultural country of old settlement, accompanying a permanent state of misery likewise without a parallel. In 1754 Ireland was computed to contain 2,372,634 inhabitants; in 1791, 4,206,642; and it now contains 8,205,382. Thus, in less than 90 years, its population has increased nearly fourfold, and this, exclusive of an emigration to England, Scotland, and America, which has been computed to amount in twenty years alone, between 1801 and 1821, to 1,000,000 of souls.† This enormous increase has co-existed with a condition of the people which may be sufficiently inferred from the single fact, that the official report of the commission appointed by government to investigate the state of the country with a view to the introduction of poor-laws, states that nearly 3,000,000 of persons, or more than a third of the population, are habitually exposed to suffer the pangs of hunger whenever there is the slightest failure in the potato crop. The evidence which connects misery and increase of population as cause and effect is rendered still more conclusive by the fact, that in Ireland the population increases fastest precisely in those districts which are known to be the most distressed. In the province of Leinster the increase between 1821 and 1831 was only 9 per cent, and in Ulster 14 per cent, while in Connaught it was 22 per cent. A more minute analysis of the returns will make this general law of the increase of population in the same ratio as poverty still more apparent. For instance, in the returns from Ulster, we find the rate of increase in the county

* This is illustrated by the evidence taken by the Irish Poor-Law Inquiry Commission. The reason assigned by most of the witnesses of the poorer classes for having married early in life is, that their only chance of support in old age is to have grown-up sons to maintain them when they are past labour. This is a perfectly *valid* reason, and to expect the poor to abstain from early marriages under these circumstances is to expect from them a degree of heroic self-sacrifice equal to that of Curtius, who leaped into the gulf for his country's good.

† Alison on Population, vol. i. p. 499. Humboldt, xi. 1.

Donegal as high as 20 per cent, and this is precisely the county which official reports represent as forming an exception to the general condition of Presbyterian Ulster, and affording an instance of poverty little less extreme than that of Connaught. In the latter province we find Galway and Mayo, notoriously the two most destitute counties, exhibiting, the one an increase of 27, and the other of 25 per cent. In Munster we find Clare, Kerry, and Tipperary at the head of the list.

Evidence of a precisely similar nature is furnished by the progress of population among different classes in Great Britain. In the large towns and manufacturing districts, where the condition of great masses of the population is, as we have already seen, extremely wretched, the rate of increase is so high, as to show that, independently of immigration, a very rapid multiplication is taking place. In Lancashire, the rate of increase between 1831 and 1841 is 24.7 per cent, while in Westmoreland it is only 2.5, and in Cumberland 4.8. In the great manufacturing towns, whose condition has been described in the Sanitary Reports, the rates of increase have been as follows:—

	Population in 1821.	Rate of Increase. 1821 to 1831.	Rate of Increase. 1831 to 1841.	Population in 1841.
Manchester and Salford	133,788	36.6	43.3	262,136
Glasgow	147,043	37.6	27	257,592
Liverpool	118,972	38.8	35	223,054
Leeds	83,796	47.2	36.8	168,869*

In all the accounts of the manufacturing population we find the same complaint repeated, of improvident marriages among the classes whose earnings are most insufficient and precarious. In the reports of the hand-loom weaver commissioners we have a great deal of detailed evidence, showing both the *fact* of a rapid increase of population accompanying destitution, and the manner in which this fact is brought about. Mr. Fletcher, after having described the condition of the poorer class of ribbon weavers in the neighbourhood of Coventry as miserable and demoralised in the extreme,† goes on to say, that "improvident marriages are

* Mr. Chadwick, in his Summary of the Sanitary Reports, fully establishes the fact that the population increases most rapidly in those districts where the mortality is highest, and concludes, "that the ravages of epidemics and other diseases do not diminish, but tend to increase the pressure of population." He shows that in the fourteen counties where the mortality has been *least*, the annual average rate of increase of population, between 1831 and 1841, has been to the rate of increase in the fourteen counties where the mortality has been *greatest*, as 112 to 183.

† Mr. Fletcher says, "I did not at first credit the statements made to me of the moral debasement which prevails among the country weavers; but the overwhelming flood of evidence at length compelled me to recognise a grossness and immorality, which are the more painful to consider, since I cannot but appre-

much more common than in years past, so much so that an usual age of marriage with the young men is twenty, and sometimes earlier;" and again, that "improvident marriages are prevalent throughout the weaving population." Mr. Miles says of the weavers of the west of England, "that they marry younger than any other class of people;" and Mr. Keyser, speaking of the silk weavers of Macclesfield, describes both the effect and cause of this accelerated increase of population among a class reduced to the extreme verge of destitution, in the following terms:—"A numerous family, which, to a man otherwise employed, would be considered an incumbrance, is rather a source of consolation to the poor weaver, whose children, even about eight or nine years of age, are capable of earning nearly sufficient to pay for their maintenance. This consideration induces early marriages and generally large families." Another witness states, "Beggarly Bisley has long been a proverb, and the improvidence of the people has been as conspicuous in the way in which they have married young in spite of this, and also in the way in which they have kept their children at home, hanging on a miserable and uncertain pittance, in preference to sending them out to work for their bread elsewhere." Similar evidence abounds of the tendency to improvident marriages among the distressed population of the manufacturing districts generally, and also among such portions of the agricultural population as are most wretched and degraded. In fact, an accelerated rate of increase in the population is a necessary result of poverty down to the point where literal starvation arrests its progress, and how low this point lies, the instance of Ireland sufficiently attests. While lumper-potatoes can be had for food, and a corner of a cellar with a bundle of mouldy straw for lodging, it is a *demonstrated fact* that population will continue to increase at a rate *five times more rapid* than in countries where every peasant lives under his own roof and cultivates his own estate. The reasons are obvious; directly the labourer is placed in a situation where he has nothing to look forward to—no hope of being able to better his condition by restraint—no definite period of establishment in life as a master-workman, or independent proprietor, to mark the prudent and customary era of marriage—all the natural checks on the instinctive appetite are withdrawn, and he marries, as a matter of course, as soon as he feels the inclination. The great check on premature marriage in every class is the "public opinion" of that class, which requires a certain in-

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hend that they prevail throughout the other large portions of our population similarly situated. The mass of the people are brutally ignorant. Their language is awfully depraved, and, independently of irreligion, they are *practically* more immoral than formerly. Bastardy is greater than ever. At every holiday time the public-houses are thronged with girls ready for the lowest excesses. Both sexes are great drinkers."—*Assistant Commissioners' Reports*, vol. ii., p. 75.

come and establishment in life before marrying, under penalty of losing caste and being looked upon as silly and imprudent.* When the standard prescribed by the "public opinion" of the class has sunk so low that, as Mr. Fletcher says of the weaving population of Nuneaton, men commonly marry "without a home to go to," or "with a bed consisting of chaff, held together by bricks, and covered with a wrapper," for sole stock of furniture, it is evident that all moral check on population is at an end, and that the evil must, of necessity, go on propagating itself, until either typhus fever and famine make a clearance, or the moral and physical condition of the people is raised by exertions from without.

The evidence from foreign countries, whose condition is at all analogous to that of England, is precisely to the same effect. In France, the only districts where destitution prevails on an extensive scale are those of the north—Rouen, Alsace, Lyons, and other manufacturing districts, and it is in these districts that population increases most rapidly. The Department du Nord especially, including the towns of Lille, Cambrai, Valenciennes, &c., appears to be the very focus of French destitution, and here the population increased in the ten years from 1826 to 1836 from 962,848 to 1,086,417, or at the rate of 13 per cent.; while the general increase of population in France, during the same period, was only 5.2 per cent.† In Belgium, Italy, and other countries, we find the same rule repeated, that wherever, owing to political or economical causes, large masses of the population are plunged in misery and degradation, the rate of multiplication is accelerated.

On the whole, therefore, we may take it as a demonstrated fact, that misery, up to the extreme point of famine and pestilence, instead of checking, tends to increase population. This *fact*, so contrary to the *theoretical* conclusions at which Malthus arrived, may afford us a clue to the means of escape from the consequences with which his inexorable theory of population threatened to envelope us. It *is true* that there is a principle in population which makes the mechanical theory of society defeat itself, and

* It is scarcely necessary to say how strongly this check operates upon the more cultivated classes. The whole of the novel-literature which describes the manners of the upper class of society, is based upon this fact—the postponement of marriage between individuals strongly attached to each other, in obedience to some *presumed* and *conventional* necessity. So strongly does this check operate, that it is a matter of demonstration, from the genealogies of patrician families in various countries, that *if people were all in easy circumstances the world would soon be depopulated.*

† In the Department du Nord more than a third of the working population receive public charity. The number of indigent is reckoned at 163,453, or 1 in 5 of the population. In Lille there are 22,281 indigent out of a population of 70,000; and in Valenciennes 5047 out of 19,841.—*Villeneuve Bargemont, Ancien Prefet du Departement du Nord. Economie Politique Chrétienne*, vol. ii., p. 50. *Eugene Buret de la Misere*, vol. i. ch. viii.

proves to demonstration that no permanent amelioration, even of the physical condition of society, can be looked for from economical causes alone. It *is true* that where a neglect of moral duties has led to the moral degradation of large masses of the community, there is a tendency in population to bring things to a crisis, and to compel society to do its duty under pain of destruction. But it is *not true* that this tendency is of the nature of an universal and irresistible decree of fate overruling human efforts. It is *not true* that if we relieve distress and diminish vice and misery, population rushes in like a spring-tide to efface the puny lines which we have traced in the sand. On the contrary, it is distinctly true, that duty and expediency, the means of raising the condition of the labouring classes, and the means of rightly proportioning their numbers to the supply of food, go hand in hand, and that in applying ourselves zealously to the task imposed upon us by religion and humanity, of relieving immediate distress, and promoting the welfare and improvement of the poorer classes, we are at the same time adopting the only effectual means of limiting the morbid and unhealthy increase of a destitute population.*

This proposition is of so much importance, that we shall endeavour to establish it, beyond the reach of controversy, by an appeal to facts. When Malthus talks of a *tendency* in population to increase in a ratio disproportionate to any possible increase of food, he deceives us by the usual fallacy of the modern school of political economists—that of substituting abstract definitions and reasonings for the sober and solid, but limited deductions of facts and experience. There are no such things as abstract tendencies in human affairs, which admit of the universal application and rigorous analysis of mathematical formulas. The science of mankind is, once for all, a concrete, and not an abstract science ; a science in which the conclusions of the philosopher in his closet

*The prejudice entertained in many quarters against Malthus appears highly unjust. He is made a symbol and representation of all that is harsh, revolting, and irreligious in the excesses of an utilitarian philosophy. What is commonly called *Malthusianism* existed before Malthus, and if it is now on the decline, the merit is very much owing to the fearless candour with which he pushed it to its extreme conclusions. So true is it that honest independent thought always does good in the long run. The great merit of Malthus appears to be, that he brought the utilitarian and mechanical theory of society to a *reductio ad absurdam*, by showing that if economical causes *alone* were admitted, the promised millenium of the ultra political economists would issue in universal famine. He brought to light a great truth, that the only lasting *economical* improvement in the condition of the people must result indirectly from a *moral* improvement in their character. His great mistake was in supposing that the way to bring about this improvement was to *leave things to themselves*, and that the poor could be taught prudence and religion by the simple expedient of abolishing poor-laws, and cutting off the occasional encouragement given to vice and idleness by private charity.

can never teach us so much as the practical insight of the honest, sagacious, experienced, and, above all, sound-hearted and conscientious statesman and man of the world. Even the legitimate deductions of experience require to be applied with the greatest caution, since it is certain that the conditions of the problem are never precisely the same, and that circumstances vary infinitely from one age and country to another. In order to make out any thing like a general tendency, such as Malthus has assumed, the first step ought to have been to show that in a great majority of old and civilised countries the population had actually gained on the supply of food, and increased to the limit at which the physical impossibility of extracting a larger amount of sustenance from the soil put a stop to further progress. Had he shown that of England, and of a majority of modern European countries, however different in other respects might be their laws and institutions, this common fact remained predicable, he might have been justified in assuming it, if not as a necessary and universal law of the human race, yet certainly as a general and very strong tendency of the social state and civilisation of modern Europe.

But how stand the facts?

In France the population has increased at the following rate, according to the latest official returns:—

POPULATION OF FRANCE.

In 1839	25,065,883	In 1820	30,461,875
1802	27,344,003	1826	31,858,937
1806	29,107,425	1831	32,569,223
Increase in ten years, 6 per cent.			
1836	33,540,910	1842	34,194,875
Increase in ten years, 5 per cent.			

This shows a very moderate rate of increase, in a country where production, general wealth, and the diffusion of property and improved habits among the mass of the population have been going on with extraordinary rapidity. "No one," says the Baron de Staël, "can compare the present state of France with that which prevailed in 1789, without being struck by the great increase of the national riches. Throughout all France the greater number of labourers and farmers are at the same time proprietors.* Nothing is more common than to see a day-labourer proprietor of a cottage, which serves as an asylum to his family; a garden, which feeds his children; a little field, which he cultivates at his leisure hours, and which enables him to sustain, with more chance of success, the terrible struggle between laborious poverty and engrossing opulence." It is esti-

* In 1838, the number of separate properties taxed for the *impôt foncier* in France, amounted to the enormous number of 10,896,000, The population of landed proprietors, with their families, is estimated at 20,000,000, or nearly two-thirds of the total population. The average size of each property is about fourteen acres.—*Porter, Progress of the Nation*, vol. i., p. 72.

mated, by well-informed writers, that from 1789 to 1840, while the population increased by about forty per cent., the national wealth has increased five-fold, and the production of every description of agricultural produce has more than doubled.*

This instance appears decisive. The alleged necessary *tendency* is completely upset by the production of a single case, in which, beyond all dispute, the operation of the ordinary and natural checks on population has proved sufficient to keep it very greatly below the increase of food. Nor is France the only instance: in Austria and many parts of Germany, in most of the cantons of Switzerland, in Sweden and Norway, and indeed in all the countries of Europe of which we have any accurate account, we find the most distinct evidence of the same fact—an improved condition of the people, and a large increase in the supply of food, coincident with a moderate increase of population. Whether we take the densely peopled canton of Zurich and Val d'Arno of Tuscany, or the thinly peopled districts of Norway and Sweden, this fact remains constant, that where the population are well off to begin with, they continue so in the absence of powerful disturbing causes, and have no tendency, by the subdivision of property or otherwise, to increase more rapidly than the increase of food and wealth. No instance of redundant population can be pointed out where there have not been extraneous moral, legislative, or economical causes, at work, to disturb the natural rate of increase.

Nor is the assertion better founded, that population does actually at this moment, in any known country, press upon the means of subsistence. That is, that there is any country of Europe where the physical impossibility of raising a greater amount of subsistence from the soil is a practical influencing cause of the condition of the population. To take the extreme case of Ireland:—here the extent of ground cultivated, or capable of cultivation, is as follows: — Arable, 5,389,040 ; pasture, 6,736,240 ; wastes, capable of improvement, 4,900,000.† Taking the population at 8,000,000, this gives one-and-a-half acres of cultivated, and two-and-one-eighth acres of cultivable land per head. In parts of the Canton of Zurich and Pays-de-Vaud, where the condition of the peasantry is about the best in Europe, the average is not one-and-a-quarter acres per head.‡ An acre of land produces, on the average, two-and-a-half quarters of wheat,§ and one quarter a year is reckoned an ample allowance for each person. An acre under potatoes yields about three

* Dupin, Force Commercial de France, Eugence Buret, de la misère, vol. ii., p. 231.

† Porter's Progress of the Nation, vol. i., p. 277.

‡ Alison on Population.

§ Macculloch's Statistics of Great Britain, vol. i., p. 476.

times as much solid nourishment as under wheat. In Great Britain there are about 1,500,000 horses, which consume each on average as much grain as would support eight men.* England, alone, has 15,379,200 acres in pastures, and supports her present population from 10,252,800 arable acres.† The produce of this arable land might, it is calculated by experienced practical farmers, be nearly doubled by the introduction of improved drainage, and of the rotation of crops and system of husbandry generally employed in the Lothians, Berwickshire, and Northumberland. In many instances, tile-draining would more than double the produce.

It is evident, therefore, that for all practical purposes, the physical inability of the soil to produce subsistence for the population may be left out of account. If England were to be parcelled out, like France, to-morrow, in small properties, 5,000,000 of families, or a population of 20,000,000, might have two-and-a-half acres of arable, four acres of pasture, and two acres of improvable waste each. This is a theoretical supposition, but we are dealing with a theory, and it is quite sufficient to show that the evil lies in the want of means to buy the food produced, and not in the want of power in the soil to produce food, which is the position contended for by Malthus.

The conclusions which we think ourselves entitled to draw from the above facts, are—

1. That instead of an irresistible tendency on the part of population to outstrip the supply of food, in point of fact the tendency has been the other way.

2. That no European country can be pointed out in which the population has even approached to the limit at which increase is limited by the physical inability of the soil to produce adequate sustenance for a larger number.

3. That it is true, however, that in many wealthy and old-established countries, a tendency exists in population to increase too rapidly for the means of employment, and thus to accumulate a fearful mass of pauperism, degradation, and misery.

4. That this tendency, however, is not universal and necessary, but results from certain known causes—viz., the lowering of the standard of comfort, independence, morality, and civilisation among large masses of the population, by bad institutions, and social revolutions in the course of industry, accompanied by neglect on the part of the government and upper classes; and that in countries, and among classes of the community where these causes do not exist, the unhealthy increase of population diminishes and disappears.

5. That, consequently, the practical inference drawn by many

* Alison on Population, vol. i., p. 45. † Porter, vol. i., p. 177.

from the theory of Malthus, that all attempts at bettering the condition of the poor by measures of immediate relief, and by the efforts of public and private benevolence, are vain and nugatory, is completely false, and that the true practical inference to be deduced from the recorded facts regarding population is, that the only effectual means of regulating the progress of population in a country, is to begin by taking effectual means to raise the condition of its poorer inhabitants.

CHAPTER III.

ECONOMICAL CAUSES CONTINUED—REVOLUTION IN THE COURSE OF INDUSTRY EFFECTED BY MACHINERY—EXTENSION OF MANUFACTURES—FACTORY SYSTEM, &c.

THE great increase of population during the last sixty years has been accompanied by a total revolution in the course of industry, and in the habits, employments, and manner of life of the mass of the people. Until the latter half of the last century we were essentially an agricultural nation, exporting grain, and producing more than was required for the home consumption. Our manufactures were considerable, especially that of woollens, but conducted entirely on the domestic system, and to a great extent connected with agriculture. The raw material was spun into yarn by the distaffs and spinning-wheels of the whole female population, and made into cloth by a number of small manufacturers or master weavers, who generally occupied small farms, and had two or three looms in the house, on which they employed themselves and families, and a journeyman or two. During harvest time and the intervals of employment the whole household were sent to work out of doors, and the loom was resumed with the approach of winter and the renewal of demand.* This system was first broken up by the wonderful inventions in machinery which signalised the close of the eighteenth century, and by the general application of steam as a motive power. The spinning-jenny, invented by Hargraves, in 1767; Arkwright's spinning-frame, invented in 1769; and Crompton's mule, invented in 1775, completely superseded domestic spinning, and

* This state of things may be found at the present day in many of the manufacturing districts of the Continent, especially in Switzerland; it is uniformly attended with the best results, and no manufacturing population are so well off as the hand-loom weavers of Zurich, Appenzell, and St. Gall, who are, at the same time, independent land proprietors.—See Symonds' Report to the Hand-loom Commissioners, and his work on Arts and Artizans; also Dr. Bowring's Report on Saxony; Laing's Notes of a Traveller, &c.

substituted the factory, built at an immense outlay of capital, employing hundreds of hands, turning thousands of spindles, and producing yarn by the hundreds of thousands of miles, for the hum of the wheel, by every cottage fireside.* The deluge of yarn thus poured upon the world gave, for a time, an extraordinary impulse to all the other branches of domestic manufacturing, and especially to weaving. The invention of the power-loom, however, and of improved methods of effecting the different processes of manufacture by the application of machinery, soon completed the revolution which had been begun by the spinning-jenny.† The 'factory system,' including under one comprehensive term the system of minute subdivision of labour, separation of the different processes of manufacture, application of machinery, and concentration of capital and productive power, came into general operation in all the great branches of manufacture, of which spinning and weaving constitute the staple processes:—viz., the cotton, woollen, linen, and silk.

The result of these changes, as far as production is concerned, has been almost miraculous. In 1800, the quantity of cotton wool taken for consumption was 54,203,433 lbs.; in 1840 it amounted to the enormous quantity of 592,965,504 lbs. During the same period the export of cotton goods has increased tenfold in quantity, and that of cotton yarn and twist, twenty-fold. In the year 1840, 790,631,997 yards of cotton cloth were exported, of the declared value of 16,302,220*l.*, and 118,470,223 lbs. of cotton twist and yarn, of the declared value of 7,101,308*l.* The total value of the entire annual produce of the cotton manufactures was estimated in 1824, by Mr. Huskisson, at 34,000,000*l.*, and is probably now upwards of 40,000,000*l.* In the other manufactures production has increased less rapidly, but still at an enormous

* A first-rate cotton-spinning factory cannot be built, filled with machinery, and fitted with steam-engines and gas-works, under 100,000*l.* A steam-engine of 100 horse power will turn 50,000 spindles, which will produce 62,500 miles of fine cotton thread per day. In such a factory 1000 persons will spin as much thread as 250,000 persons could without machinery.—*Baines's Cotton Manufacture; Macculloch's Statistics of British Empire.*

† The power-loom was invented by Cartwright, in 1787; but its introduction was gradual, and its use can only be said to have become general within the last ten or fifteen years. Macculloch estimates the number of power-looms in Great Britain at about 130,000, which, in productive power, are equivalent to about 300,000 hand-looms. The use of the power-loom is still, however, confined in a great measure to plain cloths, figured and fancy goods being woven by hand. The introduction of machinery has, however, long ago broken up the system of domestic manufacturing, except in a few branches of the cloth-trade in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and the hand-loom weaver has become a mere out-door member of the factory, with no pretensions to be considered as an independent manufacturer. It seems hopeless to expect that hand-loom weaving can ever become an employment capable of supporting a family in decency and comfort, unless where it is united with other pursuits, and taken up as an additional resource by a population of *peasant proprietors.*

rate. The annual value of the produce of the woollen manufacture in 1840 may be estimated at not less than 20,000,000*l.*; that of the linen manufacture at 10,000,000*l.*, and that of the silk manufacture at 10,000,000*l.** So far the factory system has been completely successful. It has increased the power and cheapness of production beyond any thing that could have been anticipated, and it seems capable of almost indefinite improvement in these respects. Every day fresh improvements in machinery, and in the organisation of the combined efforts of labour and capital, are enabling us to produce more rapidly, and more cheaply, and the period does not seem far distant, if indeed, it has not in some branches of manufacture already arrived, when production will have attained the maximum limit of which it is capable, and be checked by the physical inability of the world to consume all that is produced.† In another point of view, the factory system has also been completely successful. It has, in less than half a century, doubled the population, and far more than doubled the wealth and resources of the nation. If we are not at this moment a department of the grand empire, receiving laws from a prêfet of Napoleon the First or Second, we may thank the factory system for the creation of the money-power which enabled us to contend successfully with the overwhelming military force of France. We may thank the factory system also, in a great measure, for the general diffusion of wealth throughout English society, and for the great development of a middle class of tradesmen, mechanics, and artizans. So far, the factory system fully deserves the praises which have been heaped upon it by Macculloch, Baines, and other distinguished political

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* See Macculloch; Porter's Progress of the Nation; Statistics of British Empire, &c. These are all very moderate estimates, and probably below the mark at the present time. It must be recollected, also, that these *values* represent *quantities* of manufactured goods at least two-fold greater than they would have done twenty years ago, and in many branches four or five-fold greater.

† It is evident that in many branches of production we have outrun the *effective* demand, that is to say, the demand of consumers able and willing to pay a price for our commodities, which will leave fair profits and wages to the producers. We are obliged to force sales and stimulate consumption by undue cheapness, in order to get our warehouses emptied. Some economists have argued that there can be no such things as gluts, because the desire of mankind for the articles of commerce is unlimited. This is mere paradox—the vague abstract desire is no test of the effective demand which only arises when the desire is strong enough to induce the person to labour in order to produce an equivalent, and where circumstances permit him to do so. There is no effective demand for our manufactures among the lazzaroni of Naples, not because they do not prefer good clothes to rags, but because they prefer idleness with rags to labour with good clothes. With another numerous class there is no demand for foreign manufactures, because their time is of so little value, that it is impossible to undersell the home-made produce of domestic industry. The theory of unlimited competition and production has no chance of success, unless some second Watt can invent a steam power for multiplying consumers.

economists, whose admiration of the stupendous conquests achieved over brute matter has broken out into something resembling poetical enthusiasm.

But the question has another side. Along with these great and undoubted advantages, the factory system has been attended with great and undoubted evils, which fully justify the indignant denunciations launched against it by humane and benevolent men. In the first place, the destruction of the old system of domestic manufacture was in itself a great evil. The advantages of this system are clearly and forcibly stated in a report of a committee of the House of Commons in 1806:

> It is one peculiar recommendation of the domestic system that a young man of good character can always command the means of establishing himself as a little master-manufacturer, and rising to a situation of comfort and independence. Another advantage is, that any sudden stoppage of a foreign market—any failure of a great house—or any other of those adverse shocks to which our foreign trade, especially, is liable in its present extended state, has not the effect of throwing a great number of workmen out of employ.

The moral advantages of the domestic system are also strongly pointed out "in encouraging domestic habits and virtues; keeping families and apprentices under the eye of their natural master, and promoting the health and morals of a large and important class of the community."

The factory system is, on all these points, diametrically opposite. The capitalist and operative are separated by a wide gulf which it is becoming every day more and more difficult to pass. The constant incentive to prudence and good conduct afforded in the former case, by the prospect of being able to rise a step in the social scale, and to secure a more permanent and respectable position than that of the journeyman or day-labourer, is cut off, and the consequence is too often seen in reckless improvidence and dissipation, even among workmen whose money wages are comparatively high.* The position of the workmen is also vastly more insecure, the new system tending to make production a speculative affair, independent of consumption; commerce a gambling transaction, fluctuating with every political rumour and monetary derangement, from New York to Canton. The full developement of the system of unlimited competition and production threatens to make trade a succession of feverish oscillations, destroying all sense of

* So frequently is this found to be the case, that the benevolent Sheriff Alison actually reckons it one of the great evils of the working of the manufacturing system in Glasgow that the wages of certain classes of operatives are *too high*. The same remark is made by the Commissioners of the Mining Inquiry, in their Report on the Lanarkshire Iron District. It is certain that the most desperate and dissolute characters are frequently found among the class of spinners and highly-paid operatives, and that combinations, with the atrocious crimes of vitriol throwing, assassination, &c., almost always originate with this class.—*Report of Committee on Combinations, &c.*

stability and security in the life of the operative, and almost of necessity infecting him with the reckless and dissolute spirit of a gambler. The congregation of workmen in large masses, and the general transfer of manufacturing industry to crowded cities, are also results of the factory system, which could hardly fail to lead to extensive demoralisation and misery, unless a very strong moral feeling had been abroad to counteract the disadvantageous influences to which the operative was thus exposed. How completely such a moral feeling has been wanting on the part of employers, government, and of the upper classes generally; and how entirely the masses of population called into existence have been left destitute either of personal or public superintendence, is sufficiently apparent from the evidence already quoted. To speak in plain terms, the avarice of the employer has been the only law, and the axiom has been universally acted upon that whatever is profitable is right.

These inherent difficulties of the factory system have been greatly aggravated by the introduction of two enormous evils, infant and female labour. Steam power and machinery having superseded the necessity of physical force in most of the operations of the factory, and the labour of children and women being a much cheaper instrument than that of men, it became an object with producers to substitute it as far as possible. Being left at full liberty by the legislature to buy labour like cotton wherever they could get it cheapest, they succeeded to such an extent that the employment of adult male labour may almost be said to be superseded. In 4213 factories which produce the bulk of the enormous production in the four staple manufactures of cotton, wool, flax, and silk, out of 422,209 hands employed, only 96,752 are males above 18 years of age; while 244,821 are females, of whom 162,256 are below 21.*

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* Factory Commissioners' Report.

The proportion of children to adults employed in factories is on the *increase*, notwithstanding the Factory Act. A comparison of 1840 with 1839 in the Lancashire district, shows that with 100 fewer mills at work a greater absolute number both of girls and boys were employed. See Mr. Horner's Report, Dec. 1840.

To such an extent has the substitution of female for male labour been carried in some branches of manufacture, that Mr. Baker, in his Report on the Sanitary Condition of Leeds, states it is a fact, that he has known industrious husbands, in many instances, not only to tend the house and manage its domestic requirements, but actually *to carry infant children to their mothers who were at work in the mills, for the breast.—Sanitary Reports*, vol. ii. p. 394.

This will be easily understood when we consider that the result of all modern improvements in machinery has been to substitute female for male labour. In the power-loom factories of Glasgow the number of females employed is 11,000, and of males only 1,500. In the cotton, silk, flax, and woollen factories of the same city, the numbers are, females, 12,647; males, 5,585.—*Sanitary Reports*, vol. ii., p. 162.

Without entering into the disputed question, how far the gross enormities attested by evidence before the factory committee of the House of Commons in 1832, are a fair unexaggerated picture of the general working of the factory system, it is evident from the above figures that the system is radically unsound. Even if we concede to its advocates that the accounts of revolting cruelties practised on helpless infants, gross immorality resulting from the unrestrained intercourse of the sexes at the age of puberty, and general deterioration of the physical appearance and health of the factory population from exhausting labour, are partly exaggerated and partly applicable to a state of things which was always an exception to the general rule, and which has now almost entirely ceased to exist; still the fact remains, that the general result of the factory system has been to substitute the labour of *young girls* for that of *men*. This is a great evil. The emancipation of the female sex from the regular labour of productive industry, and their appropriation to the domestic duties of life, is justly reckoned one of the greatest achievements of European civilisation. The factory system reverses this process, and makes a retrograde step towards the barbarism of savage life.* The girl who commences working in a factory at 9 or 10 years of age, and from the age of 13 upwards, is employed within the mill for twelve hours daily, must necessarily grow up *uneducated*, in a sense of the word of which the mere deprivation of intellectual instruction can convey no idea. What can she know of sewing, baking, cooking, the care of children, and the thousand details of domestic economy, upon which the comfort and respectability of the labouring man's home depend infinitely more than upon the amount of money wages? What can the ties of family be between a mother who hastens from her *accouchement* to the mill, and children who are left in infancy to the care of some old woman hired for a couple of shillings a week, and who, at the age when parental discipline is most required, find themselves *independent* workmen, earning, perhaps, better wages than their father? Accordingly, all accounts of the manufacturing districts concur in complaints of the *moral* evils engendered by these causes among the factory population; of the relaxation of domestic ties, the want of management and economy of parents, and the insubordination and premature independence of children. The practical operation of the system in one of the principal manufacturing towns is thus summed up by an intelligent and disinterested witness, from whose report to the poor law commissioners we have already quoted.†

* The objection is not to female industry in the abstract, but to the habitual and regular employment of women under circumstances which render it morally impossible that they should acquire a knowledge of, and discharge the domestic duties of their sex, and where their labour supersedes that of males.

† E. Baker, Esq. Report on Leeds. Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 393.

"1. The congregation of all ages, and of every grade of character without the means of classification.

2. The early loss of parental control by the pecuniary means which are acquired.

3. The employment of female labour, whilst men are unemployed.

4. The utter inability of the wives of the operatives to obtain their requisite domestic acquirements, by which the homes of future husbands may be made more attractive than society abroad."

Even if these evils could be in some measure palliated, the crowning evil attendant on infant labour, in the abstract, would still remain—viz., that it tends to create a mass of population who are thrown upon the world destitute, like so much used-up material, at the very time when they ought to be commencing the career of active life. The official tables, showing the numbers employed at different ages, are conclusive as to the fact, that many thousands of hands annually are thrown off by the factories simply because they have outgrown employment. There are in round numbers 270,000 hands below twenty-one employed in factories, while the whole number, male and female, above twenty-one, is only 150,000; it is evident, therefore, that, one year with another, 40,000 or 50,000 persons, trained from early childhood to factory labour, must be cast adrift. What becomes of them? All other employments are full; and even if they were not, it is difficult for a person trained for ten years to a particular pursuit to learn a new trade, and begin life afresh at twenty-one, even if he has a stock of physical vigour and elasticity of which the poor factory child is too frequently deprived. Can we wonder that, in spite of the admonitions of political economists, hand-loom weaving at 5*s.* a week is still taken up as a resource by thousands? Can we wonder that the cess-pool of unemployed wretchedness in our large manufacturing towns is always full with this copious stream pouring into it, in addition to the torrent of Irish and of agricultural misery?*

These evils are so obvious, that if they form a necessary part of the factory system, no accumulation of wealth, no amount of production, can prevent us from denouncing it as a nuisance. Fortunately, however, there is evidence to show that these are not necessary evils, and that if a due regard be paid by those concerned to *moral* obligations, the factory system may be made to work well. The instance of the American factories at Lowell, in the state of Massachusetts, is decisive on this point. Lowell is a town which has grown up even more rapidly than any of our manufacturing towns in Lancashire or Lanarkshire. Twenty years ago it was a solitude. In 1835 it had become a city of 15,000 inhabitants, with a crowd of first-rate factories, employing 6795

* Or can we wonder that population increases with undue rapidity, and that poor starving wretches, cut out from every legitimate means of industry, *take to the manufacture of children as the only article for which there is a demand.*

hands, and manufacturing 38,000 bales of cotton annually, and it has greatly increased since that period. The recent visit of Dickens will have made the condition of this little Manchester known to many of our readers. It is a perfect contrast to that of our own manufacturing towns. Children are not employed at all, and the bulk of the operatives are young women between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four, daughters of farmers in the surrounding states. "They reside in various boarding-houses near at hand. The owners of the mills are particularly careful to allow no person to enter upon the possession of those houses whose characters have not undergone the most searching and thorough inquiry. Any complaint that is made against them by the boarders, or any one else, is fully investigated, and, if good grounds of complaint are shown to exist, they are removed."* In a great many of these boarding-houses circulating libraries may be found, and joint-stock pianos; and the publication of an annual, written exclusively by factory girls, which is described by Dickens as fully equal, in point of literary merit, to the productions of titled ladies, and as moreover "inculcating, in many of the articles, habits of self-denial and contentment, and teaching good doctrines of enlarged benevolence, and with a strong feeling for the beauties of nature breathing through the pages like wholesome village air," sufficiently attests the high degree of mental cultivation consistent with regular manual labour. The more detailed accounts of other travellers fully bear out the favourable picture given by Dickens of the working of the factory system at Lowell.† We find that illegitimate births are absolutely unknown, and that the factory girls rank high as a class, and are generally respectably married after a few years' labour, during which they save a handsome dower out of their wages.

Such is the state of things *proved* to be consistent with the rapid growth of manufactures with a high rate of profit to the capitalist, and, in a word, with all the elements of the factory system as it exists in England. Why is it not universal? Because certain *moral* elements of the American system are wanting in the English. In the first place, the *moral* sense of the American community and legislature has been sufficient to withstand the temptation of having recourse to infant labour.‡ In the next place, instead of leaving things to shift for themselves, public opinion and a sense of duty have made the employers of labour

* Dickens's American Notes.

† See Chevalier, Lettres sur l'Amerique du Nord, who gives a detailed account, from personal inspection, of the state of manufacturing industry at Lowell.

‡ The law provides that if children are employed in factories, three months at least out of every year shall be devoted to education. This, with the force of public opinion, amounts to a prohibition of infant labour.

responsible for the moral superintendence of those belonging to their establishment. The boarding-houses in which the factory girls lodge have been built by the companies of capitalists who erected the factories, with a view, not to *profit*, but to the comfort and morality of the operatives.* The mill-owners are most careful to select respectable matrons to preside over these establishments, and to maintain a high tone of decency and order. It is a standing rule in all these factories that any person who shall be found intoxicated, who shall commit any act of immorality, or who shall habitually absent himself from divine service, shall be at once dismissed.† Contrast this with the following description of the system pursued in most English factories —

> Children of every age not only mix with women of every age, but occasionally of every shade of depravity, and with the opposite sex also. In mills where hands are scarce, the moral habits of the applicant are rarely inquired into, nor is the contamination which she may bring with her a subject of consideration. It is not meant by this to be said that nine-tenths of the masters would permit a known bad character to be employed; but there are very few masters, if any, who know all their hands by name or even by sight, much more how they live or what they are. By this promiscuous mixing of the sexes, assignations are formed by day, to be kept in the evening when labour is over; indeed, it is not necessary to do more than ask the commonest understanding what must be the results of such promiscuous admixture of the sexes, in many of whom the principles of religion and morality have never been inculcated, and even if so, on whom, during their hours of work, they cannot be enforced.‡

Contrast also Lowell, with its churches at every turn, its schools, its libraries, with the description already quoted of Coatbridge and Monkland parish, where a population of about the same amount has been accumulated in about the same time, without a single step taken by the church, the government, the proprietors of the soil, or the employers of labour, for the moral, physical, or intellectual improvement of the people.§

How far the precise arrangements of the Lowell factories are capable of being introduced into our own, it is not easy to say, many of the worst evils, such as the employment of infant labour, which might easily have been checked at the outset,‖ having

* The Lawrence corporation limits the return from capital invested in building boarding-houses to 4 per cent., while the profit of its manufacturing capital is 10 to 12 per cent.—*Chevalier*, vol. i., p. 218. The contrast between the state of things at Lowell and that described in the reports of the hand-loom commissioners and sanitary inquiry as existing in the manufacturing towns of England, should make us pause before we set down the Americans as a nation of inveterate dollar-hunters. In no country have the claims of morality and humanity been so remorselessly sacrificed to the right of property as in England.

† Chevalier, vol. i., p. 217.

‡ Sanitary Reports.

§ We select this instance because it affords a comparison of *moral* causes free from the disturbing influence of money. The wages of the Monkland operatives have been fully higher than those of the American.

‖ No one can doubt that it would have been a good thing for the country if, 40 years ago, when the factory system was in its infancy, the Legislature had

now become part and parcel of the system. Still, however, we have evidence in the condition of a few of our own factories, which have fortunately had men of intelligence and high principle at their head, sufficient to show that even under the present system, harmony and goodwill, respectability, intelligence, and a generally high standard of civilisation and morality, may be the characteristics of the great family of a well-conducted factory.* It is in such instances that we find a ground for hope amidst the complicated and desperate evils of the modern manufacturing system. To many philanthropic writers these evils have appeared so formidable that they can see no escape from them except in a total revolution of the theory of private property, and of the relations between capital and labour. Theories of co-operative production, and joint-possession of the fruits of industry, have been advanced, and have found supporters, and it would be difficult to deny that the unrestrained right of private property has been productive of gross abuses, and that it is very possible that society may have to pass into new and untried arrangements in this, as well as in other matters.† Still, however, it appears certain that up to this time all such co-operative schemes have remained mere phantoms of the imagination, and that by far the more probable result is the extension and consolidation of the factory system, and definite separation of society into the new industrial hierarchy of capitalist and operative. This process is now actively going on in every department. In all branches of trade and manufactures we find an irresistible tendency on the part of capital to run into masses and concentrate itself in the hands of a few wealthy individuals and companies.‡ At the point at which things have arrived, this is a

prohibited the employment of children under 12, and married women; had restricted the hours of working for all minors to 10 hours; and made proper provision for their education, and had subjected all factories to a rigid inspection, in order to secure a proper attention to the health, safety, and comfort of the operatives. How far all or any such measures are *now* practicable, is another question.

* It would be invidious to mention names, but those of Messrs. Strutt and Ashworth are sufficiently well known to allow us to point to them as representatives of a class which we hope is rapidly increasing.

† These theories have been most common on the continent, where they have been very generally associated with new theories of religion, as in the case of the St. Simonians, which was a curious instance of a religion manufactured to suit the demands of a new system of political economy. Owen's system is a gross utilitarian caricature of St. Simonianism. These extravagancies, however, are indications, like straws thrown up to show the direction of the wind, of a general reaction in the cultivated mind of Europe against the equally extravagant theories that have been long current under the name of political economy.

‡ See Report of Committee on Machinery, 1841. Mr. Falkner states, that in 1831 there were 700 persons in the Nottingham trade working their own machines in their respective houses; in 1836 there were only 302 so situated. It

great advantage. The domestic system is gone, and cannot be revived, and the only hope now lies in a complete transition to the opposite system. There is the most distinct evidence that the intermediate system between the two works ill, and that all the worst abuses of the present manufacturing system are found in connection with second-rate establishments belonging to capitalists of limited means. As a general rule the larger the capital invested, the more chance is there of an intelligent and humane superintendence being exercised for the good of the operative.* Many causes contribute to this result; the large capitalist is better able to withstand fluctuations in trade, better able to prosecute the *ultimate* interests of the concern, which are generally the same for all parties; and, what is still more important, he is generally better educated, more of what is called a *gentleman;* more liberal in money matters, and more accessible to moral influences. The more capital is concentrated in a few hands, and becomes stationary in a few families and companies, the more are these influences likely to operate, until, by degrees, we have a real manufacturing and trading aristocracy, capable of acting as the patrons, protectors, and guides of a manufacturing and trading population. One effect of such a concentration of capital will probably be the destruction of the ruinous spirit of unlimited competition, which, if allowed to operate unchecked, will clearly always end in reducing profits and wages to a *minimum*, and deluging all the markets of the world with articles at a price which gives neither a return to the capitalist nor a subsistence to the operative. When production once gets into the hands of a few intelligent men of immense capital, they will find it for their interest to regulate supply by demand, and to keep up a high standard of wages among their operatives, so as to prevent unprincipled com-

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is stated in a Nottingham paper (Nov. 1842) that the cotton hosiery trade there is now concentrated in 25 large houses.

* This is not confined to the factory system. The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Mines and Collieries, states:—"The hardships and barbarous practices are confined to the smaller pits, worked by persons of small capital. The rich companies most readily and cheerfully spare no expense, which their own interest, as well as humanity towards the workpeople, prompt them to undergo."—*App.* p. 35.

The Report on Canals bears similar testimony to the efforts made by large companies, such as Pickford and Co., and wealthy individuals, such as Lord F. Egerton, for the improvement of their men.

In the case of railway companies we have already quoted the honourable instances of regard for the welfare of the men shown by several leading companies.

In the case of the Lowell factories it will not be forgotten that the proprietors are large joint-stock companies, and that the success of the system there has been compatible with a rigorous demarcation between the class of capitalist and operative.

petition.* But is not this monopoly? some will ask. Yes, it is monopoly. We do not hesitate to avow that in monopoly, provided it is fairly brought about by the force of circumstances, and is properly watched and regulated by an active and conscientious legislature, we see the best prospect of an escape from the devouring bottomless gulf of unlimited competition. The greatest improvement of modern times, the introduction of railways, is the establishment of a gigantic monopoly: the evident tendency of the extension of steam navigation is to run into monopolies. Why should we make a bugbear of a word which expresses a great *fact* in the march of modern science and industry. There is no question now-a-days of narrow exclusive monopolies, conferred by jobbing governments on rapacious favourites, or secured to selfish orders by iniquitous enactments; the question is of such an infusion of the principle of monopoly by the concentration of capital, as will restore the natural relations of buyer and seller, producer and consumer. The operative, who forms part of the great machine of manufacturing production, needs to be protected against the effects of inordinate competition, as much as the villein or serf of the middle ages needed protection against the inroads of the Hun and Tartar. The capitalist is the feudal baron, who must give him this protection. As for society at large, it is sufficiently protected by the press, by public opinion, and by the Government, and has no reason to dread an artificial enhancement of the price of manufactured commodities. The real danger is of undue cheapness; a cheapness which does not result from the employment of improved machinery, but from an unnatural reduction in the wages of labour and profits of capital, occasioned by unbridled competition and excessive production.

* We have a remarkable instance of this in *practice* in the woollen-plaid manufactory carried on in the neighbourhood of Hawick and Galashields. This being in a few hands, wages have been purposely kept up at more than double the average rate of wages for hand-loom weaving, in order to prevent an undue influx of capital and competition into a lucrative trade. In the long run, the interests of the manufacturer, the operative, and of society, are identical; viz., to keep prices at the point which will give a fair profit and fair wages, and *neither more nor less.*

CHAPTER IV.

FOREIGN COMPETITION.

ANOTHER cause very generally assigned for the existence of distress is the competition of foreign manufactures. It is said that commercial distress is the inevitable result of the breaking up of the monopoly enjoyed by this country during the war, and of the competition to which our manufacturers are exposed from those of other countries where the cost of labour is cheaper. This argument has been taken hold of by party controversy, and the evidence, both for and against it, so tinged with exaggeration, that it is not a little difficult to arrive at an impartial estimate. On the whole, however, a careful consideration of the evidence furnished by official returns, and by the reports of the various parliamentary committees which have recently investigated the subject, leads us to the following conclusions.*

In the first place, it is manifestly an exaggeration to say that foreign competition has been the *immediate and direct* cause of manufacturing distress. Our manufactures have all increased greatly since the peace, and even during periods of distress the amount of production and of exportation has continually gone on augmenting. When we find that the quantity of British produce and manufactures, as given by the official value, has increased from 35,000,000*l.* in 1816 to 102,000,000*l.* in 1840, and the actual value from 41,657,000*l.* to 51,406,000*l.*, it is impossible to maintain that industry is declining because we have been superseded in the market of the world by nations superior to us in the elements of cheap production. On the other hand, it is perfectly true that manufactures have been established, and greatly extended since the peace, in all the principal countries of Europe. The evidence given before the Committee on the exportation of machinery is conclusive as to the extent and rapid development of manufacturing industry, organised upon a similar footing to our own, in Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland, the United States, and other countries.† In addition to a large export of English machinery, immense establishments for machine making are to be found all over the continent. It will be sufficient to mention the establishment of Cockerell at Liege, that of

* See Reports of the Committees on Import Duties; on Copyright of Design; on Machinery; Symonds's Arts and Artizans; and Emerson Tennant's Belgium.

† Establishments supported by English capital, and directed by English skill, are to be found in all these countries. The system is extending itself rapidly, and even Spain, Naples, Mexico, and the South American States, are beginning to import machinery and establish manufactories.—*Report of Committee on Machinery.*

the Phœnix Company at Ghent, and others in Belgium, employing together not fewer than 8000 hands, and that of Escher and Co., of Zurich, employing 600 hands, to show the immense scale on which the manufacture of machinery is going forward. In fact, the supply of machinery has become such an extensive trade, that the committee recommend that England should abandon the attempt to retain an advantage by prohibiting the exportation of machines—an attempt which they consider can only end in excluding us from a lucrative branch of commerce, and in sending to Belgium or Switzerland the orders which can be there executed at a very trifling additional per centage of cost.* It is evident from this, as well as from the tables of our exports, that the principal nations of Europe manufacture for themselves, and are, to a great extent, independent of us. It is evident also that we have no such overwhelming advantage over them as to render competition out of the question, and that the race between us is becoming closer, as they regain their natural share of the advantages of capital, confidence, manufacturing skill, and industrial habits, of which, during the war, we enjoyed a monopoly. At the same time, it is well established, that we have such a decided advantage over all other manufacturing nations, as to render it impossible for them to compete seriously with us in third markets, or to supply their own without the aid of protecting duties. This advantage consists partly in the command of coal, iron, and cheap communication; partly in the abundance of capital; but, above all, in the energy, perseverance, intelligence, and mechanical skill, which characterise the British workman.† It has enabled us to contend, not only with rival manufactures, but with hostile legislation, and to keep up the amount of exportation undiminished. It is also clearly established that, in a great majority of cases, *domestic*, and not *foreign*, competition has been the immediate cause of the successive reductions in price that have taken place.‡

The real effect of foreign competition has been this:—Combined with commercial restriction, it has not only prevented us from

* The only description of machinery of which the exportation has been practically prohibited of late years, is that used in spinning and weaving. It has been impossible, however, to prevent extensive smuggling. The recommendation of the committee is now acted upon, and the exportation of machinery is free.

† See Second Report of Committee on Machinery. Practical men state in evidence, "that the labour of an Englishman is cheaper at 4*s.* than that of a Frenchman at 3 francs;" and that labour, estimated by *production*, is decidedly cheaper in England than in any country on the continent.

‡ The only articles in which any effective competition from foreign countries has yet been experienced in neutral markets, are—1. Fine and expensive printed goods from France, owing to the superiority in taste and design. 2. Coarse cottons from the United States, owing to the advantage in the raw material. 3. Certain descriptions of cotton hosiery from Saxony, where unskilled hand-labour is the chief element of cost. 4. A few Swiss cotton goods, owing

extended our trade with the most wealthy and civilised nations of Europe, but has gradually excluded us from their markets, and driven us to seek for others at a disadvantage; and it greatly complicates the problem of extricating ourselves from the difficulties which the manufacturing system has brought upon us, by making cheap production necessary to the existence of our export trade. This is the great practical difficulty resulting from foreign competition. We cannot *now* adopt any of the obvious remedies which ought to have been adopted in the first instance, such as the limitation of infant and female labour, and of the hours of work, without running the most imminent risk of seeing our manufactures transferred to foreign countries, and a large portion of our population reduced to starvation. There can be no doubt that, on all grounds of humanity and regard for the true interests of society, it would be desirable to limit the duration of factory labour to ten hours, which, with the time consumed in cleaning machinery, going to the mill, and returning, &c., would be quite as much as is consistent with the health, happiness, and moral improvement of the operative, and would, moreover, have a most beneficial effect in checking inordinate competition and production. Nor can there be any doubt that it would be most desirable to prohibit such a moral nuisance as the *habitual* employment of married women, and of girls and young children, under circumstances which preclude the possibility of education. But the question assumes a very different aspect when we are told that the practical effect of these measures would be to enable the French or Germans to undersell us in our principal markets, and to oblige our manufacturers to close their establishments. In the present state of things it seems evident that no government could be found hardy enough to propose measures, the probable effect of which would be to throw thousands of families out of employment; and that the most sincere well-wisher of the working-classes must content himself with endeavouring, *first*, to revive trade and raise profits, and *then* to interfere for the protection of the operative, lest the sole result of his benevolent efforts should be, as the old adage has it, to "jump out of the frying-pan into the fire."†

to the same cause, and the superiority of certain dyes. 5. A little hardware and other miscellaneous articles from the Rhenish provinces, Belgium, and Westphalia. This is exclusive of silk, which was never until late years a staple manufacture, and in which France is still superior to us in most departments. Also in some descriptions of woollen cloths, France, Belgium, and Germany, are on a footing of equality with us. See Reports on Copyright of Design, on Import Duties, on Machinery, &c.

† Since the above was written, the revival of trade has brought the question of a limitation of the hours of factory labour forward as a practical question. With every bias in favour of making the attempt to limit infant and female labour to ten hours, I hardly feel myself qualified to pronounce a decided opinion as to its practicability at the present moment, in the face of the contrary conclusion at which the government, and those who have access to the best information on the subject, have arrived.

PART III.

REMEDIES FOR THE EXISTING DISTRESS.

INTRODUCTION.

The conclusion at which we arrive from the inquiries in the last part of our essay is this—that we seek in vain to shuffle off the responsibility of our own misdeeds, by attributing the existing evils to abstract laws of political economy, and to circumstances beyond our control. Neither in the progress of population, nor in the revolution affected by machinery, nor in the state of our relations with foreign countries, is there any thing to have occasioned such wide-spread misery, destitution, ignorance, and discontent as we have seen to prevail, if a proper moral feeling had been alive, to temper the selfish spirit engendered by the sudden increase of wealth, and to bind together by new ties the new social relations called into existence; although in the absence of such a feeling, all the above-mentioned causes have aggravated the disease. The root of the evil undoubtedly lies in the absence of a sufficient vital warmth of religious and moral feeling to keep the social frame in a state of health. This has shown itself in a variety of outward symptoms, which, in their turn, have reacted on the constitution, and have been severally taken for the primary cause of the disease of which, in fact, they are more properly indications and effects. At the same time, however, it is with these outward symptoms that the state physician must begin, since the patient has now arrived at the point at which *immediate* relief is absolutely necessary.

Our view of society is this:—that there are at present many signs that an inward crisis has taken place, and that the vital warmth is rallying, but that many of the secondary complaints are so severe, that there is the greatest danger of sinking under them before the favourable change has time to operate. To vary the simile, we may say that the ship has long been tossed by tem-

pestuous weather, her seams are leaky, her rigging decayed, her stock of provisions failing, and her crew sickly and mutinous; at length the barometer shows symptoms of a favourable change in the weather, but, in the meantime, the breakers are under our lee; the question is, whether we can weather yonder cape? If so, we shall have sea-room and time to look about us; if not, we shall be dashed to pieces on the rocks before we are many hours older.

In this case, the breakers under the lee are the present severe depression of trade, and the prevalence of manufacturing distress.* It is evident that, unless something can be done to revive trade from the lethargy into which it has sunk since 1837, and especially during the last two years, a great mass of our population will become permanently degraded by poverty, to a point at which it is scarcely possible to do any thing for them. Education and religious instruction both require, as a preliminary condition, food and clothing. Even emigration requires a degree of energy and physical vigour which are inconsistent with the state of a population living in unwholesome cellars and lodging-houses on the wages of the handloom-weaver or stocking-framer, and working up the vigour of youth in crowded factories.† The report of the commissioners who visited Stockport affords a practical illustration of what "commercial depression" really means. We see a population occupying a decidedly high scale in point of character and respectability, gradually reduced, through the various gradations of poverty, to absolute want; we see benefit societies broken up, houses stripped of their furniture, decent families pawning their Sunday clothes, and, by degrees, their blankets, bedding, and every thing to the rags on their back, and distress spreading ever in wider and wider circles, and invading

* I let this stand as it was written in Nov. 1842. A fortunate change has taken place during the last year, mainly, as I believe, owing to the bounty of Providence in having blessed the country with a succession of favourable harvests, and the pressure of immediate distress has been greatly alleviated. Still, however, the general causes of demoralisation and destitution remain in operation, or are at any rate only suspended or concealed from view, beneath the glitter of a reviving prosperity and spirit of speculation, which, if not more wisely used, and turned to better account by the Legislature and influential classes, than were the similar periods of 1825 and 1836, will, according to all reasonable probability, lead to very much the same results.—Feb., 1844.

† "The younger population, bred up under noxious physical agencies, is inferior in physical organisation and general health to a population preserved from the presence of such agencies. The weavers of Spitalfields are rapidly descending to the size of Lilliputians; and yet, forty years ago, the regiment of volunteers raised in Bethnal Green and Spitalfields were good-looking men. Bad air, bad lodging, and bad food, cause the children to grow up an enfeebled and diminutive race of men; but of 613 men enlisted at Birmingham and the neighbouring towns, only 238 were approved for service."—Chadwick, *Sanitary Report*.

even the middle classes of society. The following instance, told by an eye-witness, may serve as an illustration of the process by which thousands and thousands of decent operatives are being converted into houseless beggars:—

On my road from Colne, I was stopped by a group of seven operatives, who stated their distress in firm but respectful terms, and asked for relief. One of them particularly struck me; he was the living skeleton of a giant. His tale was soon told; he had been a weaver of mousselaine-de-laine, and in prosperous times had earned from thirty shillings to forty shillings a week; he had a wife and four children dependent on his exertions, and he had long maintained them in decency and comfort. Work began to grow slack; he hoped that times would mend, and was unwilling that his family should lose the comforts to which they had been accustomed; he drew the little fund he had placed in the savings bank —it was soon exhausted, and work was slacker than ever. He began to retrench, and to sell his furniture. He told how each article was resigned, with bitter regret, and how hopes of retrieving his affairs gradually faded. Before Christmas every thing had disappeared, including the Sunday dresses of himself, his wife, and children. Since that time he had been seventeen weeks without work of any sort, and had been principally supported by the charity of neighbours little better off than himself. When I offered him a shilling, he refused to receive it until I gave my name and address, that he might repay it if ever an opportunity offered.*

If Providence had not blessed the country with a favourable harvest, this would have been the story, not of thousands, but of hundreds of thousands, during the ensuing winter; and even as it is, the depression, as indicated by the state of the revenue, and the accounts from the manufacturing districts, is most extensive and severe.† The immediate problem for solution, therefore, clearly is to revive trade; this done, the far more difficult and extensive problem is to reorganise society and eradicate the different evils which the neglect and misconduct of generations have been accumulating on us.

Keeping this in view, we shall proceed to examine the specific causes and remedies that have been assigned; discussing, in the first place, those that appear immediate and practical, and, in the next, those that are of a more general nature. Under the first head will come the corn-laws, commercial legislation, and measures calculated to give immediate relief to trade. Under the second, education, religious instruction, emigration, poor-laws, and general domestic legislation, with a view to the permanent elevation and improvement of the poorer classes.

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* Dr. Taylor, Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts.

† Written in Nov., 1842. The first symptoms of revival manifested themselves in the spring of 1843, but the return of prosperity was by no means decided until the prospects of the harvest of last year were ascertained to be favourable.—1844.

CHAPTER I.

FREE TRADE.—CORN-LAWS.

It is evident, from what we have already seen, that the existing distress in the manufacturing districts arises not from any decline or inferiority to other nations, in the power of production, but from the increasing difficulty of finding a profitable market for what we produce. The obvious practical remedy, therefore, for manufacturing distress, is to extend our markets. This may be done in two ways :—

1. *Directly* with foreign countries, by removing political and other difficulties which stand in the way of the extension of our commerce.
2. *Indirectly* with our own country, by increasing the means of our population to purchase commodities.

Situated as we now are, with nearly a third of our manufacturing production depending on foreign countries for a market, the second of these measures is, to a great extent, involved in the first, since nothing tends so much to improve the home market as a brisk foreign trade, affording employment and remunerating wages to the people. The only other efficient practical mode of improving the home market is to lower the price of necessary articles of consumption, so that, with the present employment and wages, the mass of the labouring population may have a larger surplus to spend in clothes and manufactured commodities. These appear the two main points for a practical statesman to look to ; the question is, how are they to be attained?

When we look at the state of our foreign commerce, it is evident that the great impediment to an extension of the market for British manufactures is to be found in the general adoption of restrictive systems, which prevent the free interchange of commodities. Without entering into the question whether protective duties are, under all circumstances, unmixed evils, and whether free-trade in the abstract is always desirable, it is sufficiently evident that a country like England, which is clearly ahead of the rest of the world in manufacturing industry, and which has a large population depending on the export trade for existence, has more to gain than to lose by the general adoption of free-trade principles. There cannot be two opinions as to the suicidal folly of setting the example of a restrictive policy, and voluntarily excluding ourselves from markets to which we might have obtained or preserved access. There is, perhaps, no better illustration of the truth of Oxenstiern's saying, "How little wisdom goes to govern states," than the fact that, with so much at stake on the extension of foreign commerce and discouragement of restrictive tariffs, the En-

glish Government should have allowed its own tariff to continue for twenty-seven years after the peace of 1815, the most cumbrous, complicated, and exquisitely irrational piece of restrictive legislation ever devised. This absurdity has been, to a considerable extent, reformed; and perhaps it is not too much to say that all parties are at length agreed on the advantage to England of free-trade *in the abstract*, and that the only difficulty now lies in its application to certain powerful and important interests, which, it is contended, ought to be exceptions to the general rule. This brings us to the important question of the corn-laws.

This question, in itself simple enough, has been enveloped in such a mist of interested and angry discussion, that it would be endless to attempt to discuss all the arguments that have been advanced by partisans on each side. It will be sufficient to give a short statement of the leading arguments, together with the reasons which appear sufficient to enable a disinterested practical man to make up his mind without much difficulty.

On the one hand it is urged that all the general arguments in favour of free-trade apply with peculiar force to the case of food; —that in the case of a country where a decided majority of the inhabitants depend on trade and manufactures for their existence, and where the supply of food is clearly insufficient for the wants of a dense and rapidly-increasing population,* it is positive inhumanity to endeavour to raise prices, and prevent importation by artificial restrictions;—that these restrictions are an insuperable obstacle to the establishment of friendly commercial relations with foreign countries, and act as a direct incentive to, and bounty upon, the creation of rival manufactures;—that not only do they shut us out of foreign markets, but also limit the home demand by obliging the bulk of the population to expend a disproportionate amount of their earnings in the purchase of food, and by imposing a tax on the community equivalent to the artificial enhancement in the price of wheat and other necessary articles of consumption;—and finally, that this tax, which has been estimated at not less than all the other burdens of the state put together,† is in-

* The average importation of wheat alone from foreign countries during the ten years, 1830—1840, was 1,200,000 quarters a year. In the four years, 1838—1841, the importation was—1837, 1,848,477 qrs.; 1838, 2,711,309 qrs.; 1839, 2,401,367 qrs.; 1840, 3,322,866 qrs.—*Parliamentary Tables.*

The population employed in agriculture is only about two-sevenths of the whole population.

† Taking the gross amount of revenue paid into the Treasury at 50,000,000*l.* a year, have you been able to form an opinion what proportion this additional taxation on the food of the country would be?—I consider that the taxation imposed upon the country by the duty on corn, and the provision duties and prohibitions, are far greater, probably much more than double the amount of taxation paid to the Treasury.—*J. Macgregor, Esq., Committee on Import Duties.*

This may be considered a bold assertion; but there can be no doubt that the

flicted for the sole purpose of putting, by a roundabout and wasteful process, an additional million or two a year into the pockets of the landed interest—an interest who have less claim than any other class in the community to protection at the expense of their neighbours.

On the other hand, it is contended that protection is absolutely necessary for the existence of British agriculture—that if the highly-taxed farmer and wheat-consuming labourer of England are exposed to competition with the Polish serf, the inevitable result must be, that large tracts of arable land will be thrown into pasture, or relapse into a state of nature, and that we should thus come to depend exclusively on the foreigner for our daily bread, a result so dangerous to national independence, that no extension of our foreign commerce should ever induce us to hazard it. It is said, also, that a high price of food is a benefit to the labouring classes, and advantageous for the whole community, since it keeps up a high rate of wages, and that a repeal of the corn-laws is sought for by the manufacturers solely to enable them to reduce wages to the level of the Continent. Thus it is contended the corn-laws are, in fact, essential to the prosperity of the home-market, and that any extension of foreign trade that might follow their repeal would be no equivalent for the great falling-off in home consumption that would accompany the ruin of the agricultural interest and the decline of wages. It is denied, moreover, that foreign nations would consent to take our manufactures in exchange for food.

On a review of these arguments it appears to us that there is some exaggeration in the statements of the advocates of free-trade, and that the corn-laws are not responsible for all the evil consequences attributed to them. In the first place, the statements that the corn-laws have called the manufactures of the Continent into existence, and that the corn-producing countries are all ready to take our manufactures, require considerable limi-

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amount of indirect taxation is very great when we consider that the annual consumption of the country is estimated at about 18,000,000 quarters of wheat and 45,000,000 quarters of grain of every description. For every *shilling* a quarter, therefore, that the price of grain is artificially raised by protecting duties, on the average, which will be about equivalent to an enhancement of 1*s.* 6*d.* per quarter on wheat, a tax of 2,250,000*l.* is paid by the consumers. So also for every 1*d.* a lb. that the price of meat is raised by protection (the estimated consumption being 50lb. a head for 16,000,000 of people), a tax of 3,300,000*l.* a year is paid by the nation.

The saving upon necessary articles of consumption for the year 1843, as compared with 1839 or 1840, cannot be estimated at less than 25,000,000*l.*, which sum has, in a great measure, gone to increase the demand for manufactures and articles of commerce in the home market. This, much more than the opening of new markets in China and the East for two or three millions worth of manufacturers, has been the cause of the revival of prosperity.—1844.

tation. Germany and the United States are the only two countries of which it can be maintained, with any degree of plausibility, that our corn-laws led to the adoption of the restrictive system, and in the case of Germany it is evident that it is *now* too late to hope, whatever it might have been twenty years ago, that the repeal of the corn-laws would lead to the admission of British manufactures on equal terms. There is no practical ground whatever for saying that the repeal of our corn-laws would lead to the immediate establishment of free-trade all over the world.

A still more important consideration is, that a repeal of the corn-laws, even if it were to be attended with all the consequences which the most sanguine of its advocates predict, would evidently, in a few years, bring us back to the point from which we started, with an increased population, and all our difficulties on an enlarged scale, *unless the system on which we have been proceeding for the last fifty years is radically altered.* The rapid increase of manufacturing industry during the war did not prevent, if it did not rather occasion, the miseries and distress under which we are now suffering. All the worst evils at present existing, ignorance, demoralisation, infant and female labour, increase of destitution, grew up simultaneously with a more rapid advance of manufacturing wealth, than it is possible to expect from a repeal of the corn-laws. The temporary prosperity of the period from 1833 to 1836, when profits were high, food cheap, and when our export trade took a new and extensive development, terminated in the crisis of 1837, and the lingering decline under which we have been ever since suffering. It is evident that the doctors who prescribe a repeal of the corn-laws as a sovereign remedy for *all* the diseases of society, are only one degree more respectable quacks than those who earn a living by puffing the all-potent pills of Morrison, the hygeist.

At the same time, after making every deduction for quackery and exaggeration, there appears a clear balance of valid unanswerable argument in favour of an application of the principles of free-trade to food. In the first place, we must remember that the most important practical question is one of *temporary* relief, and that a partial revival of trade is the indispensable condition of such ulterior remedies as may effect a permanent cure.* If

* This argument is, of course, somewhat modified by the altered aspect of affairs since 1842; but it remains substantially true that some more *permanent* improvement of the condition of manufacturing industry than, looking at past experience, can be reasonably expected, if no alteration is made in the old system, is the first indispensable condition of social amelioration, and that this permanent improvement can only be hoped from a vigorous application of sound principles of commercial and financial legislation.

this distress at present existing in several branches of the cotton manufacture extends and becomes general, which there is no reason whatever why it should not do so if something is not done, the schemes of the philosopher and philanthropist will be swallowed up in one common ruin. If the description applicable to-day to Stockport and Paisley should become to-morrow applicable to Manchester and Glasgow, to Leeds and Sheffield, what will become of church-extension, prison-discipline, education, emigration, and the other schemes for reducing the mass of vice and misery in large towns? You might as well set up a steam-engine to pump the Lake of Geneva dry while the Rhone is pouring into it, swollen with the melting of Alpine snows.

When we look more closely at the arguments advanced in favour of corn-laws, they appear to us fallacious for the following reasons :—

1. It appears to us an unwarrantable assumption that protective duties are essential for the existence of British agriculture. In the first place, there is a large *natural* protection arising from the expense of importing wheat and other bulky articles of food from foreign countries. This is, in fact, a most efficient sliding-scale in favour of the British farmer, since it becomes relatively higher in years of cheapness, and is always higher in the case of remote and uncivilised countries, where the prime cost of production is least.* In the next place, there is distinct evidence that agriculture in England admits of very great improvement, and that by the adoption of more skilful methods of husbandry, and the judicious application of capital in draining, &c., the produce and value of a great part of the soil might be greatly increased.† It is proved that in the Lothians, farmers do at this moment actually pay at the rate of 3*l.* 10*s.* to 7*l.* per acre for land not greatly superior to the average quality of good wheat land in England,

* The apprehension of an inundation of Polish corn is evidently absurd. Under the operation of the present corn-laws the whole surplus produce of Poland is thrown in, whenever we have a short crop, and on the average of the last three years the whole importation from Dantzic and other Prussian ports has not exceeded 700,000 quarters a year. The whole of Northern Europe has never afforded more than 1,600,000 quarters under the stimulus of prices raised by the sliding scale. With free-trade we should get more from America, but there is no reason to suppose that the supply from Northern Europe could be greatly increased, at least for many years. The freight and charges on a barrel of American flour, imported to Liverpool from New York, are between 6*s.* and 7*s.*, or, at present prices, 25 per cent. *ad valorem*, exclusive of duty. The produce of the interior provinces of Poland cannot be brought to Dantzic for less than 15*s.* or 20*s.* a quarter. See Jacob's Report. Macculloch's Commercial Dictionary.

† See Letter of Robert Hyde Gregg on Scotch Farming in the Lothians. Report of Agricultural Committee of 1836.

and *thrive upon their farms*.* It is proved also, that they do so, not by throwing land into pasture, but, on the contrary, by keeping it under a constant rotation of crop, and that they pay their ploughmen fully better wages than in most English counties.† The utmost conceivable effect of a total repeal of the corn-laws in this district would be to reduce rents one-half; and even this would leave them higher than the average rate of rents throughout England under the present system. There is no obstacle whatever to the general adoption of the system of husbandry common in the Lothians and East of Scotland, and in Northumberland, except that which arises from the general repugnance of landlords and farmers to make changes until they are forced into it, and the chances are, that a repeal of protection would greatly accelerate the march of improvement. As for land being thrown into pasture, if the importation of cattle, provisions, &c., was left free as well as that of corn, the chances are that the reverse would be the case, and that the system of rotation crops, which is proved to be the most productive, would be generally adopted. If the same proportion between arable and pasture land were observed in England as in Scotland, it would at once bring 2,500,000 additional acres under the plough; and if the Lothians' system of husbandry were adopted wherever the land was fit for it, a great part of the 15,379,200 acres of pasture land in England would be restored to a cultivation which would increase the demand for agricultural labour five-fold.‡ With this quantity of pasture land lying partially unproductive, the argument that a free trade in corn would make us politically dependent on foreign nations does not seem entitled to much weight. As it is, we have been for many years past dependent on foreign countries

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* Mr. Gregg gives the following approximation to the division of the gross proceeds of a farm in the Lothians:—

Rent	33 per cent.
Expenses	47 ditto.
Profit and interest	20 ditto.
Total	100

† The current rate of wages is 12*s.* a week for a ploughmen, and 10*s.* to 11*s.* for a common labourer. Mr. Gregg's estimate is, that, after making a fair allowance for tithes, poor-rates, and all other exemptions, which in Scotland fall upon the landlord, land generally through the south-eastern, eastern and central parts of Scotland, yields 40 to 50 per cent. higher rent to the landlord, better profits to the farmer, and more comfortable subsistence to the labourer, than land of the same natural quality in England.

‡ The general extension of the tile draining is another circumstance calculated at the same time to give extensive employment to the agricultural labourer, and to increase permanently the relative fertility of land in England. The application of science to agriculture, and an attention to the leading principles pointed out by Liebig and other distinguished chemical writers, are also likely to effect great improvements in agriculture. We have been assured by practical farmers that the introduction of guano as a manure has in many cases been attended with the most astonishing results.

for a supply whenever we have had a short harvest; and, although the operation of the sliding scale has limited us to the countries dependent on a single government—that of Russia—for a great part of this supply, we have never experienced any political inconvenience. Indeed, it is not very apparent how we could be precluded by political causes from obtaining a supply of foreign corn, when such supply really was in the market, and we had the means of purchasing it. What is there to prevent this supply from reaching us under a neutral flag, or by transhipment to a neutral port? In order to starve us into submission, the Emperor of Russia, the King of Prussia, and the Government of the United States, must combine together to prevent their subjects from selling the produce of their lands, not only to British merchants, but to those of Hamburg, Holland, Denmark, and any neutral maritime state—a result which is evidently quite impossible.

2. In the conflict of *theoretical* opinion between the opponents and supporters of the corn-laws as to the effect of high prices of food on the rate of wages and condition of the labouring classes, and the consequent prosperity of the home market, the result of an appeal to *practical* experience seems to be decidedly in favour of the former. It is a matter of notoriety that the cheap years from 1833 to 1836 were years of general prosperity to all classes except what is called the agricultural interest, that is to say, the class of landlords and tenants. On the other hand, the dear years from 1837 to 1842 have been marked by a progressive falling off in trade, wages, profits, and especially in all branches of industry connected with the home market, and by loud and general complaints from all classes, with the exception of the farmers.* It is not a question of theory but of fact, that during the years of dear provisions wages have not risen, but fallen in every department of industry, except in that of agricultural labour, and there have not risen sufficiently to compensate the labourer for the rise in the price of food. It is evident also that the great depression in trade during the last three or four years has arisen principally from a falling off in the home demand, which began with, and has accompanied a succession of dear years.†

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* Since the above was written, another extraordinary confirmation of the position, that cheapness of food is an essential element of general prosperity, has been afforded by the revival of trade in 1843 consequent upon a great fall in the price of corn and provisions.

† The following evidence appears conclusive to establish this important fact:—

Evidence given before the Committee on Import Duties and other Parliamentary Committees.

Mr. Kingan, an eminent manufacturer:—

Query: If the price of corn were lowered, would not the manufacturer lower the rate of wages?—I think quite the reverse.

3. The advocates of the corn-laws seem to us to fail entirely in substantiating the fundamental position upon which all their arguments depend, that the present system works well for the agricultural interest. The agricultural interest consists of three classes: First, the agricultural labourers, forming, with their families, a population of upwards of 5,000,000; secondly, the farmers, or agricultural occupiers employing labourers, of whom there were 187,075 in Great Britain in 1831; thirdly, the landowners, of whom there are not above 200,000, including all the petty statesmen and cock-lairds, of whom a large proportion are rather labourers than landed proprietors, leaving not above 30,000 or 40,000 to divide among them the great bulk of the landed rental of Great Britain, of 30,000,000*l.* or 40,000,000*l.* per annum. Now the utmost that can be said of the corn-laws is, that their operation has been beneficial for the class of landed proprietors, and to a certain very limited extent for the class of farmers. The latter position may well be denied, since there is abundant evidence to show that the farmers of England have not thriven better than other classes under the corn-laws, and since every plentiful harvest brings with it a loud cry of agricul-

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Query: Why do you think so?—Because, *practically, you always find wages fall as corn rises.*

W. Leaf, Esq., one of the most extensive merchants connected with the export of British manufactures:—

Query: From your extensive business in all branches of trade, have you had opportunities of observing the condition of trade during the great changes that have occurred in the price of provisions?—I have *always* observed that when provisions are dear, especially if they continue so for a considerable time, the manufacturing districts fall into great distress, and extensive loss and ruin is the consequence. It was so in 1829, 1830, and 1831, and it has been so in 1839 and the present year, 1840 (to which the experience of 1841, and the first half of 1842, may be added), whereas, when provisions were cheap, as in 1834, 1835, and 1836, trade was good, and all classes were well paid.

Query: From your experience, what conclusion have you come to as to the effect which high or low provisions have on wages?—I have invariably observed that when provisions are cheap the operatives are well employed and well paid, and that, on the contrary, when provisions are dear there is little work, *and the operatives are less paid.*

Mr. Whitstone, an extensive worsted manufacturer in Leicester:—

"My manufacture (that of worsted and woollen stockings) is almost entirely dependent for its demand upon the well-doing and well-being of the working and industrious part of the community and those immediately connected with them, and it is an invariable rule in our trade that when *provisions are cheap we have a good demand*, and *vice-versa*.

We have already seen abundant evidence that the wages of agricultural labour have not risen since 1836 in proportion to the rise in the price of food. The Report of the Poor-law Committee of 1836 contains the testimony of many farmers and practical men to the same effect. We have never discovered a single particle of evidence by any practical man stating that any individual operative, of any class, was, to his knowledge, better off in consequence of a rise in the price of food.

tural distress. However, even if it were established that both farmers and landlords have been benefitted by protection, the fact would still remain that nine-tenths of the population who live by the culture of the soil have been reduced from a comparatively flourishing condition, when food was cheap, to that which we have had occasion in a former chapter to investigate. A system under which the bulk of the agricultural population live, without hope, without prospect of advancement, or even of providing for sickness or old age, upon weeks' wages about half the amount of what it would cost society to keep them in the prison or workhouse, has certainly little claim to be considered a *protection to the agricultural interest*. Already we see that agricultural wages are at a point at which any attempt at further reduction is met by incendiary fires and predial insurrection.* Lower than this they cannot well go; and if the corn-laws are to be continued under the pretext of benefiting the agricultural population, we ought in common justice to bargain that wages shall be raised. The truth is, the agricultural interest has hitherto meant the interest of those who have parliamentary influence, and can command votes at elections; the interest, in fact, of not one-hundredth part of those who live by land.

4. When we look at the contradictory, uncertain, and theoretical nature of the arguments adduced in support of the corn-laws, we cannot for a moment allow them to weigh against the immediate and practical arguments for their abolition derived from the state of our commercial relations with foreign countries. We have already said that we do not coincide with the exaggerated statements which represent the whole world as ready to adopt free trade the moment we relax our prohibitions; but, on the other hand, it is probable that some countries are ready to do so, and especially the United States of America, by far the most important of our customers. The loss, or indefinite extension, of the best market in the world for British manufactures, is at this moment staked upon the adoption or rejection of a liberal commercial policy towards the staple produce of America. Already a rival manufacturing interest exists in the New England States, and the weight of these States is constantly thrown in the balance to enforce such a tariff of protecting duties in favour of domestic manufactures, as would most materially interfere with the importation of British commodities. This disposition towards protecting duties has hitherto been kept in check by the opposition of the southern states, whose staple produce, cotton, is admitted into our ports at a very low duty, and whose interest it is to purchase their supplies in the

* This was the case in 1830, on a most extensive scale; and symptoms of a recommencement of the same system of incendiarism are already showing themselves, wherever attempts have been recently made to lower wages.

cheapest market. This favourable bias of the southern states has been, however, greatly shaken of late years by the dissensions which have arisen between England and the United States on the subject of slavery; so that the delegates of the other states have no reason to fear, as in 1833, that the enforcement of a hostile tariff against British manufactures would lead to a civil war and dissolution of the union. The necessities of the revenue, caused mainly by the embarrassments, which are an indirect consequence of the refusal of England to take American produce in payment for our manufactures, have, under these circumstances, recently led to the adoption of a tariff which imposes a scale of duties on British goods amounting, in many cases, almost to prohibition. The question is, whether the northern states and the Whigs can maintain this tariff against the democratic party and the southern states. The western and central states hold the balance in their hands, and it depends on them whether America shall finally decide on imitating the example of the great nations of Europe, and encouraging domestic manufactures at the expense of agriculture, or shall adopt the more natural system for a country with a vast extent of uncultivated land, of affording her population a free access to the cheapest markets. The importance of this decision for England cannot well be exaggerated. The United States, peopled by 17,000,000 of the descendants of the English race, speaking the English language, and in all respects English in their habits, tastes, and wants, is, in point of fact, a *home*, and not a *foreign* market. Under a system of reciprocal free trade there is no reason whatever why our commerce with the United States should not be on precisely the same footing as with one of our own colonies. As in Australia or Canada, a great proportion of the wealth extracted from the soil of virgin continents might be regularly exchanged for the produce of British industry. When we consider that the population of the United States doubles itself every twenty-five years, and that there is scarcely an individual of this population who has not the means and the wish to expend several pounds annually in manufactures which England can produce cheaper than any other country in the world, there seems scarcely any limit to the extension of this market which may be reasonably looked for. It is the only market which affords the slightest prospect of keeping pace with production.

On the other hand, if, by refusing to admit American produce, we confirm her in the adoption of a restrictive policy, it is quite certain that our intercourse with the United States will not only never receive the development of which it is capable, but will, on the contrary, be reduced below its present amount. The American manufactures are already formidable rivals; they have many advantages in the possession of the raw material, water power, and habits of industry, energy, and mechanical skill among the people; their chief disadvantages are in the high rate of wages and profits

which, in the nature of things, are diminishing every day, as the population becomes more dense. With a moderate amount of protection (quite within the limit at which extensive smuggling would become profitable), they would soon supersede us in the supply of many of the most important articles of general consumption, and, once established, we know by experience how difficult it would be for any government to withdraw from them the accustomed protection. Moreover, such commerce as we retained with America would always be, as at present, on a feverish and uncertain footing while we continue to exclude their staple produce.

Now it is morally certain that we have it in our power to negotiate a commercial treaty, or arrangement, with the United States on a footing of real and substantial reciprocity, but that if we neglect to avail ourselves of the opportunity, it will soon pass away, and in all probability never again be presented. The admission of flour and provisions free, or at low fixed duties, is the essential condition to such a treaty. Under these circumstances it appears madness to hesitate, even if the theoretical arguments in favour of corn-laws were far more cogent. Whatever difficulties may beset the economist in his closet, in settling all the hair-splitting distinctions and inferences that have been raised, to his entire satisfaction, the course of the practical statesman is clear enough. He should not hesitate for a moment to endeavour to effect a fair, equitable, and satisfactory arrangement with the United States on the basis of mutual free trade, and for this purpose be prepared to repeal the duties on American flour, wheat, and all articles of food, with a view to securing a fair equivalent in the admission of British manufactures to the United States' market at reduced duties.*

Having, for these reasons, arrived at the conclusion that a re-

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* The whole argument in the text in favour of a repeal of the corn-laws, derived from our relations with the United States, was written more than a year ago, which will be borne in mind by the reader, who may be tempted to consider some of the positions advanced as superfluous *truisms*. Upon revising the whole passage I find nothing to add, but that the course of events during the past year has greatly increased the cogency, and accelerated the pressure of all the arguments which were hazarded in 1842 as predictions. It is evident that the coming presidential election will, in a great measure, decide the line of commercial policy *definitively* taken by the United States, and that in this contest Calhoun, the free-trade candidate, will in all probability be defeated, unless England relaxes from the attitude which, during the last year, has thrown a damp over the free-trade interest in America, and inclined the balance of the Western States in favour of protection. If Lord Ashburton had been commissioned to negotiate a commercial arrangement when he settled the boundary question, admitting American flour free, or at a low duty, it is next to certain that the free-trade interest would have carried the next presidential election. As it is, it appears almost certain that Calhoun will be defeated, and far from improbable that Clay, the candidate of the manufacturing interest, and champion of the protective system, may be elected.

peal of all duties on corn and other necessary articles of food would be desirable, it would be superfluous to enter at any great length into the question of the comparative advantages of a fixed duty or sliding-scale. The balance of advantage must, in the first place, be determined by the amount of protection. A low sliding-scale may be preferable to a fixed duty so high as to amount to virtual prohibition, and *vice versâ*. Taking, however, the case of a sliding-scale and fixed duty, so adjusted as to afford about the same average amount of protection, it appears to us that the former is more advantageous in principle, the latter more convenient in practice. The great practical convenience of a low fixed duty, as compared to a sliding-scale, is, that it affords greater certainty to mercantile transactions; greater likelihood of accumulating a reserve supply in bond, to meet the exigencies of unfavourable seasons; greater facilities for commercial arrangements with other countries, especially the United States; and on the whole greater advantage to the revenue. On the other hand, a fixed duty on the importation of foreign corn appears utterly indefensible in principle, unless as a measure of *protection;* and if we concede the principle of protection, it would be hard to show that the form which is most acceptable to the parties to be protected, and which imposes the least burden on the consumer in seasons of scarcity, is not the best. A customs duty on the importation of an article, nine-tenths of which are produced at home, is clearly indefensible as a measure of revenue. An excise duty, which only raised the price of wheat 1*s.* per quarter to the consumer, would give a larger revenue than a customs duty of 8*s.* on importation. Accordingly, the only argument which has even a shadow of plausibility in favour of a fixed duty (except as a temporary measure of compromise based upon political as distinguished from commercial considerations) is, that the duty would be, in fact, paid by the foreigner, and not by the English consumer. It is said, and with truth, that the English merchant regulates his orders in any particular case by a calculation of the price which, after deducting all charges, will leave a profit, and that if a fixed duty, say of 8*s.*, is included among those charges, the effect will simply be, that he will come into the Dantzic market as a purchaser at 50*s.* a quarter instead of at 58*s.*, as he would have done if there had been no duty. This is no doubt true of the *immediate* effect; but a little consideration will show that it is an error to extend the inference to the *permanent* effect in regulating prices and imports. The fundamental axiom of modern political economy is, that the price at which a commodity sells depends permanently on the cost of production, and temporarily only on the fluctuations of supply and demand. Supply and demand cause certain oscillations round what may be called the position of stable equilibrium, or natural price, as determined by cost of production. Almost all errors in

popular reasonings upon economical questions will be found, if sifted thoroughly, to resolve themselves into a confusion of these *temporary* and *permanent* effects. Thus, in the case in question, it is, doubtless, true, that the immediate effect of a free-trade in corn as compared to a fixed duty, would be to cause a more intense demand in the foreign market, and, consequently, an oscillation of price above the natural price determined by cost of production, of which oscillation the foreign grower or speculator would reap the benefit. But must not this oscillation in the course of things shortly correct itself by an increase of the supply, until things find their natural level? With a perfectly free-trade it is plainly impossible that the price of corn in one country can permanently exceed the price of corn in another, *plus* the cost of transport. The *natural* price of corn will be, in all cases, regulated by the cost of production in the country where production is cheapest, *plus* the cost of transport. If the average price in England under the present corn-law exceeds this natural price, the effect of a total repeal would be to diminish the cost of production in this country by throwing the worst soils out of cultivation, and introducing more scientific and economical modes of farming, and to increase it in the countries from which we import by the stimulus of our demand leading to the cultivation of less fertile soils or investment of further capital, less advantageously at each successive instalment, until things once more found their natural level, and the average price of corn in England equalled the average price in the country of cheap production, *plus* the cost of transport. With a fixed duty instead of free-trade, the process would be precisely the same, only that things would adjust themselves to a different level, the standard in England being higher by the amount of the duty.

This theoretical reasoning may be rendered more clear by a practical illustration of what would be the actual working of a fixed duty as compared with free trade. The following is, we believe, a tolerably close practical approximation to the existing state of things with regard to corn. England, with an average harvest, produces about 20,000,000 quarters of wheat, which is a proportion of supply to demand about sufficient to fix prices at 60*s.* a quarter. Every successive addition of about 2,500,000 quarters to this supply brings prices down about 5*s.* a quarter. Foreign countries can produce an almost unlimited quantity at about 35*s.* a quarter, but owing to the length of voyage, the difficulties of internal transport, &c., the practical supply is limited pretty much as follows:—2,500,000 quarters can be imported, say at a cost of 10*s.* a quarter for transport, &c.; 2,500,000 quarters more at 15*s.*; 2,500,000 quarters more at 20*s.*, and so on. Suppose, therefore, first, that there is free trade, prices here being 60*s.*, the first batch of 2,500,000 quarters is imported, which

brings the price down to 55*s.*, this price still admits of the importation of the second batch, which can be sold in the English market for 50*s.*, and this additional supply reduces the average price of the year to 50*s.*, at which importation stops.

Now, if under the same circumstances there had been a fixed duty of 5*s.* a quarter, the first batch would still have been imported, and would have brought the price down to 55*s.*; but here importation would have ceased, because, by the supposition, the second batch could not be sold, after paying duty, below 55*s.*, while its importation would bring the price in the English market down to 50*s.* The practical result, therefore, would be, that in the one case the average price for the year would be 55*s.*, in the other 50*s.*, upon the whole consumption of 22,000,000 quarters.

Upon these grounds we believe a fixed duty to be utterly indefensible, unless as a measure of protection. It may be admissible as a measure of political compromise,—that is to say, it may be better to pass gradually from protection to free-trade through the intermediate stage of a fixed duty, than to hazard a violent political convulsion by insisting at once on a complete remedy. But this is entirely a question of political expediency which can only be solved when the conjuncture presents itself of a government able to carry a low fixed duty with the consent of the House of Lords and of the landed interest, but unable to carry a total repeal without a struggle for life and death between different branches of the legislature and classes of society.

In the meantime, upon all economical grounds, it appears to us that a total repeal of all duties upon corn and other articles of necessary consumption, as well as upon all articles which are classed under the head of raw materials of industry or manufacture is the only sound solution of the question; and we are satisfied that this solution would, on the whole, be found the best for the agricultural interest itself, more especially for the tenant farmers, who have more to fear from the uncertainty and fluctuations attending the incessant agititation of the corn-law question, than from any permanent arrangement. If, in the case of existing leases, a power to the tenant could be given to commute some portion of his money rent into an equivalent grain payment, as has been so generally and advantageously done of late years in the best farming districts of Scotland, we believe that he would in most cases find himself in a more secure and satisfactory position under a system of absolute free-trade than with a protection which he generally finds to be nominal and illusory.

CHAPTER II.

FREE-TRADE CONTINUED—NEW TARIFF—PROVISIONS, SUGAR, ETC.—RECIPROCITY SYSTEM—COMMERCIAL TREATIES.

As regards provisions, live stock, and all other articles of agricultural produce, the arguments which have been used in the case of corn apply with even greater force. The rise in the price of cattle, butchers' meat, &c., resulting obviously from the insufficiency of the supply to meet the legitimate wants of an increasing population, has been of late years so enormous, that all parties, except, perhaps, a few graziers, stock-farmers, and their landlords, are ready to admit that the continuance of a monopoly which has pressed with such hardship on the middle and lower classes of society, is no longer desirable. It is evident, also, that restrictions on the importation of provisions and dairy produce act as a direct bounty on the conversion of arable land into pasture, a result which, however beneficial for the landlord, is most injurious for society, since it has the effect of throwing agricultural labour out of employment. Accordingly the reductions made by Sir R. Peel in his new tariff have been hailed with great satisfaction by all reasonable men. The present duties on provisions, &c., are, on the whole, moderate, when compared with the scale of protection on corn; but, should the latter be reduced, it would be clearly necessary to reduce the former still lower, in order to counteract, as far as possible, any inducement to throw corn land into pasture. Indeed, under any circumstances, we should conceive that the reduction of the duties on butcher's meat, salted provisions, butter, cheese, and other articles of general and necessary consumption, to the *lowest possible* amount, would be an unmixed advantage: and, of course, if this reduction could be made the means of obtaining an equivalent in favour of British manufactures from the United States, Holland, or Germany, the arguments in its favour would obtain additional strength.

The only other question connected with free-trade, of sufficient importance to require a separate discussion, is that of sugar. Before the period of negro emancipation the supply of sugar from the West Indies exceeded the demand for home consumption, so that England was an exporting country, and the price of sugar was regulated by the general price of sugar in the European market. Under these circumstances, the protecting duty in favour of colonial sugar was merely nominal.* The great falling

* There is nominally a protecting duty in favour of colonial sugar; but the excessive rate—viz., 63*s.* a cwt. on foreign, and 24*s.* on colonial, is equivalent, in point of fact, to absolute prohibition.

off in the West India supply since the emancipation of the negroes, together with the great increase of production in Cuba, Porto-Rico, the Brazils, and Java, have completely altered this state of things. In the year 1840 the average price of colonial sugar, exclusive of duty, had risen to 48*s.* 7¾*d.* per cwt., while the average price of foreign sugar of an equal quality was not above 20*s.* to 24*s.* per cwt. The average consumption per head for each person in the United Kingdom being, at least, 20 lb. per head,* or 4,800,000 cwts., it is evident the protection-tax on sugar cost the country, at least, 5,000,000*l.* It is said that, by the application of free-trade principles to sugar, either this sum might be saved to the consumer, without loss to the revenue, or gained to the revenue without loss to the consumer; while, at the same time, our trade with the Brazils and other sugar-producing countries might be greatly extended. This can scarcely be denied; but, on the other hand, it is contended, in the first place, that there are moral considerations connected with the subject of slavery, which should make us very reluctant to compromise the success of our great experiment of negro emancipation by adopting measures, the practical effect of which would undeniably be to give a stimulus to the slave-trade:—in the next place, that there is fair ground for hoping that the deficiency of supply from our own colonies is merely temporary, and that if the transition of the negroes in the West Indies to habits of regular industry as free labourers, and the rapid extension of sugar-cultivation in the East Indies, are not too abruptly checked by exposing them to the competition of slave-grown sugar, a few years will suffice to make us independent of foreigners for a supply of cheap sugar. Lastly, it is said that no immediate relief could be attained by an extension of the Brazils market for our manufactures, if it was obtained by a corresponding contraction of the East and West India markets, which would necessarily follow any measure that had the effect of throwing sugar estates out of cultivation.

Amidst these conflicting arguments the state of our commercial relations with the Brazils appears to afford the best clue to a practical solution of the question. We have a treaty with the Brazils at present, under which our manufactures are admitted on very favourable terms, the import duties not exceeding about 20 per cent. Under this treaty Brazil has become one of the best markets in the world for our manufactures, especially for some branches, such as printed cottons, which we have most

* The consumption of sugar in the year 1835, when the price was 33*s.* 9½*d.* per cwt, or, with the duty, 57*s.* 9½*d.*, was 4,421,145 cwt., or 19·21 lb. per head. In 1840, owing to the increased price, the consumption sunk to 3,764,710 cwt, or 15·28 lb. per head. In 1841, the consumption was 4,065,971 cwt., or 16·8 lb. per head.

difficulty in finding a market for elsewhere.* This treaty expires in 1844, and, as a matter of course, the Brazilians refuse to renew it while we continue to exclude their staple produce. Now we cannot afford to *lose* the Brazils market; therefore we must make up our minds to make some reduction on their sugars. On the other hand, it is not desirable, for the reasons already stated, to carry this reduction so far as abruptly to destroy the cultivation of sugar in our own colonies. The problem for the practical statesman to solve is this:—to keep the Brazils market open for our manufactures at moderate duties, and to arrange the scale of sugar duties so that Brazilian sugar may meet and compete with, but not supersede, colonial sugar in the British market.† If, at the same time, any stipulations could be made, for the *bonâ fide* enforcement of the obligations into which the Brazilian Government has already entered for the suppression of the slave trade, the success of the negotiation would be complete; but this, perhaps, can scarcely be expected.‡

As regards the sugar of Cuba and Porto-Rico, it may be desirable, in the present state of our commercial relations with Spain, to retain the present duties until reasonable duties are substituted on British manufactures. The sugar of Siam and China should be admitted on reasonable terms; that of Java may be dealt with according to the disposition shown by the Dutch Government to make corresponding concessions in favour of British manufactures.

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* In 1839, Brazil took 1,587,680*l.* worth of manufactured cottons, being more than any other foreign market, the United States, which comes next, taking only 1,459,322*l.* Brazil stands third in the list of foreign markets for manufactured linens, fourth for woollens, second for earthenware, and fourth for hardware and silks.—*Parliamentary Tables.*

† A scale of duties not very unlike that suggested by Mr. Macgregor in his evidence before the Committee on Import Duties—viz., 15*s.* a cwt. on colonial, and 30*s.* a cwt. on foreign sugar, would probably be the best solution.

‡ Since the above was written, the negotiation for a renewal of the treaty with the Brazilian Government has definitively failed, mainly, as we believe, owing to the refusal of that Government to mix up the question of slavery with that of commercial arrangement. In the state of things thus presented to us, I am inclined to think that we must make up our minds to abandon the desirable but impracticable object of discouraging slavery by refusing to admit the produce of slave labour. It is a principle which it is impossible to carry out fully; and I am aware of no sufficient ground for distinguishing between the case of sugar and that of cotton, coffee, or tobacco. I doubt if there is a sufficient feasible and practical prospect of advantage in our undertaking the office of champions of humanity against slavery, to balance the evils resulting to our own industry from commercial isolation and the political evils of quarrelling with all our neighbours by intermeddling with their domestic institutions. On this view of the case, therefore, I conceive that we ought to endeavour to negotiate a commercial arrangement with the Brazils purely on commercial grounds, which I should think it probable might be effected by admitting their sugar at 30*s.* per cwt., and their coffee at 6*d.* per lb.

From what has been already said, it will be evident that we look upon the extension of commercial treaties, or rather commercial arrangements, by which a gradual approach is made to the principles of substantial reciprocity with foreign countries, as one of the most obvious and important *practical* means at the disposal of Government of affording relief to industry. Such arrangements can be on one basis only to be really beneficial—that of fair and upright dealing as between man and man; that is to say, of real, substantial reciprocity. We have already got what are called reciprocity treaties with a number of countries, but they practically amount to little more than treaties of reciprocity as regards port dues and other charges on shipping. The commercial reciprocity in these trearies merely amounts to this—that neither nation is to establish differential duties against the produce of the other, in favour of a third party. This is of very little use where the produce of *all* foreign countries is excluded or restricted alike. The basis of a real reciprocity treaty should be, "We will deal with you if you will deal with us. We will admit your wines, brandies, corn, provisions, or other staple articles of produce, at duties which will allow them to come freely and fairly into consumption, provided you will do the same with our cottons, broad cloth, hardware, or other staple productions of British industry. If possible, we will establish a fair balance of trade with you on a footing of mutual advantage." That *such* reciprocity arrangements would be of the greatest service to us there cannot be a doubt. The prejudice which exists in certain quarters against what is called the system of reciprocity treaties, results entirely from losing sight of the true nature of the existing treaties which go by that name. They are, as we have already said, treaties for the establishment of a reciprocal scale of port charges on vessels, forced upon us at the conclusion of the war by the manifest impossibility of retaining in peace the monopoly which circumstances had given us during the war, of the carrying trade of the world. No one can doubt that if it had been possible to preserve this monopoly, and to prevent the Prussians, Americans, Swedes and Russians, from building ships, and plying for freight in competition with British bottoms, it would have been an advantage to the British shipowner to do so, but as this was *not* possible, the question had come to be, whether it was better to resign ourselves to competition in particular branches of trade where we could not help ourselves, or to see our ships excluded by differential duties and port-charges from all the harbours of Europe, and of the United States. The Earl of Ripon (then Mr. Robinson), and Mr. Huskisson, most wisely chose the former alternative, and the result has shown that the shipping interest has stood the competition better than could

have been reasonably expected, and that, although freights have fallen greatly, along with other rates of profit, the amount of British tonnage has gone on steadily increasing.* Still no one can contend that the effect of treaties thus forced upon us by circumstances, and in which the concessions were, from the necessity of the case, all on our side, has any analogy with the effect of treaties of real commercial reciprocity entered into with a view to the increased interchange of commodities between two countries dealing with one another on a friendly and independent footing of mutual advantage.

We have already indicated the principal countries with which it appears practicable at the present moment to negotiate such treaties, viz., the United States and the Brazils. A golden opportunity of concluding a treaty with France, which would have been attended with considerable immediate advantages, and would have paved the way for a friendly commercial intercourse between the two countries, was thrown away in 1840, in order to secure an imaginary political advantage in the East. How far these blunders admit of being now remedied, and what opening there is for a mutually-benefical arrangement with Austria, with the Germanic Union, and with the minor powers, such as Naples, Tuscany, Sweden, Denmark, &c., are questions which those immediately connected with the government are alone in a position to answer. It is enough for us to say, that wherever such arrangements are practicable, whether directly by treaty or indirectly by a mutual understanding for the reduction of certain articles in the tariff, they ought to be made without delay, and the principle of protection both to domestic and colonial produce ought to be so far modified as to allow of a fair reciprocity.

We have only to add, that in expressing these views respecting reciprocity, we by no means wish to be understood as giving in our adherence to the views which have been propounded by Colonel Torrens and other writers, under the name of the "Reciprocity Theory." With that theory we agree so far as to believe that the *maximum* of advantage is in all cases to be realized by a *bonâ fide* and substantial reciprocity, or to enunciate the proposition in larger terms, that the tendency of modern civilisation is towards what may be called an international division

* The number and tonnage of vessels belonging to the United Kingdom were as follows :—1815, last year of war, 21,869 ships, 2,447,831 tons ; 1823, year before the signature of the first reciprocity treaties, 21,042 ships, 2,302,867 tons ; 1840, 21,670 ships, 2,570,635 tons ; 1841, 22,654 ships, 2,768,262 tons. In 1823, the amount of British tonnage employed in the foreign trade, which entered inwards into British ports in the course of the year, was 1,740,859 tons, that of foreign tonnage 582,996. In 1041, the numbers were—British, 2,807,367 tons, beside 355,595 tons of steamers ; foreign, 1,297,840 tons.

of labour. As the progress of science and improvement has tended to increase the productive power of man in his own country by the division of labour, so, we believe, will the process be further carried out by the division of labour among countries and communities. Each country will, by degrees, take more and more to the production of the commodities in which it has a natural or acquired advantage, and thus industry will become more and more productive. Thus also the nations of the civilised world will become more and more linked together, by a reciprocity of benefits into one great family.

To this extent we fully agree with the advocates of the reciprocity theory, but we differ from them when they tell us that this reciprocity, to be beneficial, must be universal. Colonel Torren's theory is, that if one nation adopt a liberal commercial policy while others retain respective tariffs, the nation which throws its ports open will see itself drained of its bullion until its resources, scale of wages, profits, and every thing else measured by money, stand permanently at a lower level than they would have done if she had, to use a vulgar phrase, returned tit for tat, and combated restrictions by restrictions.

This theory appears to us equally unsound in principle, and opposed to experience. Mr. Senior, in his article in the *Edinburgh Review*, in reply to Colonel Torrens, appears to have demonstrated unanswerably that in a commercial country like England, where bullion is constantly transpiring at every pore, it is idle to imagine that any temporary effect on the exchanges produced by a one-sided reduction or increase of import duties, can permanently affect the general level. Equally unanswerable is the position, that when two nations are rival producers in the market of the world, and one of them, by imposing restrictions, raises prices at home, and *pro tanto*, diminishes the efficiency of her productive power, while the other pursues the opposite course, the latter will find herself not in a less, but in a more advantageous position.

We are disposed also to think that for a country circumstanced like England, it is, generally speaking, a better plan, even with a view to the ultimate object of an attainment of reciprocity with foreign countries, to set the example of a liberal policy, rather than to attempt to extort concessions by the threat of counter-prohibitions. This, however, is rather a question for the practical statesman in each particular instance, than for the application of rigid and unbending economical theories of which we have very generally an extreme distrust.

CHAPTER III.

TAXATION.

Among the remedies proposed for an alleviation of existing distress, a change in the system of taxation often occupies a prominent place. When we consider, however, that an imperative necessity exists for raising an annual revenue of at least 50,000,000*l.*; and that in a country whose existence is so entirely dependent on the maintenance of public credit, it would be highly impolitic to adopt hazardous experiments with the revenue, the amount of immediate relief attainable from this source appears to be overrated. In fact, the *protection*-taxes have been greater burdens on the country, and greater obstacles to the development of commerce and industry, than the *revenue* taxes; and an extensive repeal of the latter being impossible, any benefit to be derived from their mere modification is comparatively trifling to that which may be expected from the adoption of more liberal commercial principles. At the same time, there is no doubt that some immediate, and great ultimate good, might be done by a thorough and comprehensive reform of our financial system, founded upon sound principles. The following principles appear to be those which ought to guide a nation situated like England in regard to taxation:—

1. To avoid taxes which have a demoralising effect, or which tend to oppress and degrade any class of the population.

2. To avoid taxes which burden industry, render us less able to sustain foreign competition, and throw obstacles in the way of the extension of commerce.

3. To avoid taxes which are frivolous and vexatious; that is to say, which do not make an adequate return for the expense of collecting, and the inconvenience occasioned.

4. To avoid, as far as possible, taxes which abridge the comforts and enjoyments of the poorer classes.

There can be no question that *direct* taxation, fairly adjusted, so that every one should pay in some tolerably approximate proportion to the benefit he receives from society, is preferable to any of the above description of taxes.* An income and property-tax,

* Direct taxation has the advantage of taking the requisite sum with the least expense to the nation, and least interference with industry. Every indirect tax costs the nation, first, what is paid into the revenue; secondly, what is paid for the additional trouble and outlay of the importer and for the false direction given to trade and industry. The second of these items, which is frequently the heaviest, is entirely saved by direct taxation. Direct taxation has also the advantage of falling proportionably heavier on the rich; while indirect taxation almost always falls heaviest on the poor. This has been denied; and it has been said that an income tax injures the poor more by limiting the expenditure

—that is to say, a tax graduated so as to fall more heavily upon income derived from realised property, than upon income dependent on life or on personal exertions, is evidently the fairest in theory. Such a tax should embrace all incomes which place their possessor in a position decidedly superior to that of the common labourer, and should be graduated to fall more heavily on incomes of a large amount, the benefit derived by the holders of such incomes from the maintenance of law and government being clearly much greater in proportion than in the case of small incomes. Notwithstanding, however, the theoretical fairness of such a tax, it may be a question whether, in a commercial country like England, the difficulty of ascertaining the amount of income, without an oppressive and vexatious scrutiny, does not counterbalance the advantage, and render the more rude approximation to a fair income-tax, afforded by a house-tax, preferable.* For our own part, we are strongly inclined to prefer an income-tax, and to believe that at least three-fourths of the clamour against the inquisitorial nature of the tax originates simply in a childish dislike to swallow the pill unless it is disguised, and that in more than half of the remaining cases the excessive fear of exposure arises from motives which are either ridiculous or wrong. This, however, is a question which the experiment now in course of trial will decide. Whatever may be the result, one thing is clear, that direct taxation, in one form or another, must be the basis of any serious attempt at a reform of our financial system, there being no possibility, either of pushing economy much farther, or of adding materially to the revenue by a mere re-adjustment of indirect taxation.

According to these views, the *beau ideal* of a financial system for a country like England, would be to raise the necessary revenue—

1. By taxes on articles whose consumption it is desirable to discourage on moral grounds—such as taxes on spirits, spirit and public-house licences, &c., which should be always as high as can be borne, without giving extensive encouragement to smuggling and evasions of the law.

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of the upper classes, than it benefits them by saving them from paying the same amount themselves in the shape of a tax on consumption. No doubt an income tax falls *partly* on the poor; no doubt *every* tax is an evil compared to *no tax;* but the question is, whether, if a certain sum is to be raised, it is better for the poor to stand the *whole loss*, by paying it themselves, or *part of the loss*, by making the rich pay it, and suffering *indirectly* from the reduced expenditure. Those who maintain that the first plan is the best, are bound, in consistency, to maintain that the poor ought to club together and pay the *whole of the taxes* of the rich, since they would get *more* than an equivalent back by their increased expenditure.

* The objection to a house-tax is, that it falls disproportionately heavy upon those who are obliged to live in towns in order to follow a trade or profession. A poor surgeon, or shopkeeper, or briefless barrister, is often compelled to live in a higher-rented house than a country squire of 2000*l.* a year.

2. By taxes on luxuries and superfluities.

3. By taxes on articles of *general* but not *necessary* consumption, such as tobacco, tea, sugar, coffee, &c. In this and the preceding case the rate of duty should be regulated solely by the interest of the revenue, which will always be promoted by not raising the duties so high as materially to check consumption and encourage smuggling.

4. By direct taxation.

On comparing our actual financial system with the principles above laid down, we shall find it susceptible of great improvement. The excise on malt and hops is very objectionable, from the encouragement it gives to spirit drinking and public houses, by preventing the poorer classes from obtaining a cheap and wholesome beverage at their own houses. It may be a question also whether, with the same view, the duties on spirits and licences for the sale of spirits might not be raised.* The excise on glass is most objectionable, as tending to prevent improvement in the manufacture, and to keep up, most exorbitantly, the price of an article which is essential to the improvement of the dwellings of the poor. For the same reason the duties on bricks and on timber are very objectionable. The latter was, perhaps, the worst tax levied, both on this account, and also because cheap timber is an essential element in the prosperity of most important national interests, but it has been greatly diminished by the late reform of the tariff.† Under this head, of taxes which tend to discourage habits of decency and respectability among the poorer classes, may also be enumerated the duty on soap, and, to a certain extent, perhaps, those on tea, coffee, and sugar, also on tallow and paper. Among the taxes which burden industry, and throw obstacles in the way of the extension of commerce, may be mentioned, in addition to the corn-laws, and all duties on

* No one who recollects the effect of "cheap whisky" in Scotland can doubt that the reduction in duty was an evil. The amount of demoralisation from smuggling was insignificant compared with that resulting from the cheapness of spirits; and the system of smuggling having been once broken up, would not be easily revived, especially with the great change of feeling on the subject among the poorer classes, occasioned by the spread of temperance societies. If the experiment tried by Sir Robert Peel last year, of adding 1*s.* a gallon to the duty on Irish spirits is found to succeeed, (that is, not to occasion an inordinate amount of smuggling,) the duty might be raised in Scotland 1*s.* or 2*s.* a gallon with the greatest advantage. The duty on spirit licences might also be raised. At present almost every petty grocer in Scotland sells spirits. In Glasgow alone there were 2274 spirit shops in 1841.

† The reduction in the duty on foreign timber was the greatest boon—first, to the poorer classes, the cost of whose dwellings depends very much on the price of timber; secondly, to the shipping interest, with the exception of a few shipowners concerned in the Canadian timber trade; thirdly, to the population engaged in the fisheries. The reduction in the timber duty was alone much more than an equivalent for the income-tax, if we look at the number and station in life of the persons respectively benefitted and injured. We should very much like to see the remaining duty on foreign timber entirely repealed.

the importation of food, the duties on raw materials of manufacture; viz.—that of 2*s.* 11d. per cwt. on cotton, and of 9*s.* 4d. per cwt. on sheeps' wool, with the duty on raw and thrown silk, and some other minor duties. These are admitted on all hands to be objectionable, and are only retained owing to the necessities of the revenue. In the event of a commercial treaty with the United States, the duty on cotton wool would, of course, be repealed, and probably it would be necessary to make some reduction in that on tobacco, which is at present excessive, and leads to smuggling.*

The stamp duties on deeds and conveyances, especially those of land, are objectionable, as tending to restrict the transfer of estates and diffusion of landed property; but while the present expensive and complicated system of law prevails, little good would be done in this respect by a mere reduction of the revenue duties. A comprehensive reform which, without violating the existing system of landed property, gave free scope to the legitimate and natural diffusion of land in small portions, would tend more than any thing, in the course of a few years, to restore *rural* England to a sound and healthy state.

Many of the minor duties of the excise and assessed taxes are also objectionable, on the ground of being vexatious and unproductive,† and if the principle of direct taxation was well established, might, with great advantage, be consolidated under one head. Supposing it to be conceded that an income-tax or a house-tax is to be paid, at any rate, there is no one who would not prefer paying an additional one or two per cent. to being perpetually pestered by demands for taxes on windows, dogs, servants, horses, armorial bearings, &c. On the whole, therefore, the practical conclusion at which we arrive is this—that the following taxes, producing in 1841 the following amounts, ought, if possible, to be repealed or greatly reduced.

Excise duties on—Glass	£ 714,425
Bricks	523,379
Customs duties on—	
Cotton wool	648,935
‡Sheeps' wool	153,395
Silk and other raw materials, about	50,000
Total	£ 2,090,134

* The duty on tobacco is 3*s.* per lb., which is nearly 400 per cent.—Irrespective of a treaty with America, this is an article upon which the most profitable amount of duty for the revenue should be imposed. It is not, as in the case of spirits, desirable to discourage its use on moral grounds, nor, on the other hand, is it important to make it cheap. Looking solely at the interest of the revenue, it is a fair question whether a large reduction in the duty would not produce more money eventually. At any rate the present duty should not be allowed to stand in the way of a good treaty with the United States.

† The excise on vinegar, for instance, produces only 22,000*l.*, to obtain which 72,970 persons were subjected to a survey of their premises.

‡ The Government has proposed the repeal of the duty on sheeps' wool this

Together with all duties on corn, flour, provisions, butter, cheese, and other agricultural produce, which would make a loss to the revenue of about 1,500,000*l.*, or in all of 3,500,000*l.*, which would be compensated by a tax of less than three per cent. upon incomes above 150*l.* a year; or by a tax of about two per cent. upon fluctuating incomes, and four per cent. upon those derived from property.* In addition to this it would be very desirable to reduce, or greatly modify, the following taxes :—

	Ann. prod.
Excise duties on—	
Malt	£5,000,000
Hops	340,000
Soap	800,000
Vinegar and minor articles	40,000
Customs' duties on—	
Timber, sugar, and tea, say reductions to extent of	1,000,000
Tallow	180,000
Miscellaneous	100,000
Assessed taxes on—	
Windows, servants, horses, &c., to be commuted for a property-tax, about	2,500,000
Stamp duties on—	
Marine and fire-insurances, deeds, stage-carriages, &c., say reduction to the extent of	1,500,000
Total	£12,000,000

Or, if the malt duty was only reduced one-half, about 10,000,000*l.*, which, with the present amount of income-tax, and that already calculated upon to meet still more urgent reductions, would give a total of about 17,000,000*l.*, which would require to be provided for by direct taxation in order to carry out a thorough and comprehensive reform of our financial system. Taking Sir R. Peel's estimate of last session, which is admitted on all hands to be considerably below the mark, this sum could be raised by an income-tax of about 12 per cent. on all income derived from property, and of 6 per cent. upon all income derived from trade and personal exertion.†

session. This is a step, of the propriety of which there cannot be two opinions.—1844.

* If all incomes above 50*l.* a year were taxed, under a graduated scale, as explained in the next note, an average of three per cent. on income from realised property, and one-and-a-half per cent. on income from personal exertion, would be sufficient to raise 4,000,000*l.* a year.

† Schedule A, comprising rent of land, houses, &c., is estimated at 72,000,000*l.*; and schedule C, comprising dividends of public funds, &c., at 29,900,000*l.* Total from income on realised property about 100,000,000*l.* Schedule B, occupation of land, 26,000,000*l.* Schedule D, profits of trades and professions, 42,000,000*l.* Schedule E, salaries of public officers, &c., 5,250,000*l.* Total of income from trade, personal exertion, &c., about 75,000,000*l.*

12 per cent. on 100,000,000*l.* gives	£12,000,000
6 per cent. on 75,000,000*l.* gives	4,500,000
Total	£16,500,000

There can be little doubt that such a reform would be most beneficial, not only for the interest of the great mass of the population, but indirectly for a majority of those who were called upon to contribute; but it is useless to follow the subject further, since it is evident that there is no practical possibility, for the present, of going much farther than has been already done in the way of direct taxation. One of the great benefits which we anticipate from the diffusion of a more manly, vigorous, and conscientious tone of public feeling among the upper and middle classes is, that it will enable an enlightened minister to carry great measures for the relief of the labouring population, even where they entail a heavy amount of pecuniary sacrifice in the first instance. In the meantime, however, it is obviously impossible for any government to go very far in advance of the public opinion of the classes who compose and who control the legislature, and it would be premature to speculate on the probability of any thing more than a gradual extension of the principle of direct taxation, in order to enable the government to carry through such reductions in the duties on corn, provisions, sugars, &c., as may be necessary in order to extend our commercial alliances, and to restore prosperity to our industry.

CHAPTER IV.

CURRENCY AND BANKING.*

It would be useless at the present day to waste time in discussing any of the plans which have been propounded for restoring prosperity by unbounded issues of paper-money. No one can

It is assumed that incomes below 150*l.* are not to be exempted, and that the exemption is only to extend, as in 1814, to incomes below 50*l.*, but the tax should be graduated, so as to fall lighter on small incomes, the deficiency being made up by an equivalent excess in the per centage on incomes above a certain amount. For instance, income up to the point of competency, say to 150*l.* a year should pay a certain rate; from competency to gentility, say 150*l.* a year to 500*l.*, a certain additional rate; gentility to wealth and political influence, say 500*l.* to 1500*l.*, so much more; and all beyond this point the highest rate. There would be no great difficulty in adjusting the details with a tolerably approximate regard to justice.

The actual returns under the income-tax have so far exceeded Sir R. Peel's estimate, that all the figures in the text, and in the above note, ought to be reduced one-third.—1844.

* I let this chapter stand as it was written, although, in some respects, it must appear out of date, because it expresses my leading convictions on the subject: viz.,—a rooted distrust of all currency nostrums, and a belief that the state of banking and circulation is but one of the secondary causes of national distress, and has had little or nothing to do with the state of the country for the last three or four years. As far as I am able to judge, Sir R. Peel's measure is devised with admirable good sense to provide the best practical security for a sound system of circulation in future, with the least amount of interference with existing interests.—1844.

doubt that any temporary advantage obtained by the stimulus of a redundant currency is always much more than compensated for by the re-action which never fails to ensue after a period of gambling excitement and fictitious prosperity. The best of all currencies is that which follows the natural fluctuations of commerce, and represents most exactly the state of an unadulterated metallic currency, with a free trade in bullion. This may be at length assumed as an axiom, and also, that such a condition of a mixed currency, consisting partly of gold, and partly of paper convertible into gold, can only be maintained by regulating the contraction or expansion of the paper part of the currency in correspondence with the fall or rise of the foreign exchanges.

During the last twelve or eighteen months it is evident that the state of the circulation has had nothing to do with the existence of distress.* On the contrary, distress has existed *notwithstanding* a remarkably sound state of the circulation, with favourable exchanges, an abundant and increasing stock of bullion, and a superfluity of money in the money market. This undeniable fact greatly abridges the necessity of a minute inquiry into the state of our banking system with a view to immediate legislation. There can be no question that the maintenance of sound principles respecting circulation and banking is of the highest importance, and that a departure from the principles has, on several occasions, aggravated existing evils; but it is also clear that this is not the case at the present moment, and that the task of the legislature is rather *prospective*, to prevent the recurrence of abuses, than *immediate*, to effect a present alteration.

The two points to be considered with a view to such prospective legislation, are—first, currency, or the creation of money; secondly, banking, or dealing in money. At first sight it seems an anomaly that the two should be connected, and that the privilege of creating one part of the circulating medium, by the issue of paper money, should not be in the hands of the government, as well as that of creating the other part, by the coining of gold and silver. In practice, however, there are many advantages in leaving this privilege, under proper control, in the hands of mercantile bodies which are brought into immediate contact with the wants of the country and the demands of commerce. The danger is, that this privilege may be abused either from ignorance or from interested motives. This took place to an alarming extent after the peace, and led to the crisis of 1826, from which the country has never entirely recovered. This led to the suppres-

* This argument has been strengthened by the occurrences of the last twelve months. It can hardly be maintained that the state of the currency has been, since the year 1840, an active influencing cause, either for good or bad, on the general condition of the country. It was perfectly sound during the period of greatest depression, it has continued sound throughout every oscillation, and with the revival of prosperity.—1844.

sion of 1*l.* notes, the contraction of private banking, and the concentration of more control over the circulation in the Bank of England. These remedies removed the worst evils in the system, but they did not suffice to prevent a renewal of the same scenes, on a smaller scale, in 1836-7. The immediate cause of this latter crisis, doubtless, was to be found in the undue extension and extravagant management of joint-stock banks, coupled with a departure, by the Bank of England, from the sound principles of circulation by which the directors professed to be guided. Since then we have seen another partial crisis in the monetary system in 1839-40, occasioned mainly by the sudden exportation of large quantities of gold to purchase corn. While the sliding-scale of duties on corn continues, it is impossible to avoid fluctuations in the monetary system arising from the latter cause, whenever the harvest in England takes an unexpectedly unfavourable turn. We must make up our minds to be exposed to a sudden and heavy drain of bullion whenever an extensive demand for some article of importation comes *irregularly* into play, and especially if it is directed towards countries which are not in the habit of taking our commodities in exchange. A reform in the corn-laws would, therefore, be at the same time a great security against fluctuations in the monetary system. Supposing this effected, the question would then remain—first, whether the Bank of England can be trusted to act in future upon the sound principles by which it professes to be guided: secondly, whether, supposing it to do so, it has a sufficient control over the circulation to prevent the private and joint-stock banks from defeating its measures.

Both these points were very fully investigated by the late committee of the House of Commons on the Banks of issue, and much contradictory evidence given by the partisans of different systems. To analyse this evidence, and discuss the different theories advanced, would lead us too far from more important objects, especially as the result left on our mind by a perusal of the report has been, that it is very doubtful whether any complete departure from the present system would be safe or desirable. It seems probable that the severe lessons taught by the experience of 1826, 1837, and 1840, will be sufficient to ensure in future a timely contraction of the circulation on the part of the directors of the Bank of England, whenever decided symptoms of over-speculation and an unfavourable turn in the foreign exchanges appear; and, on the whole, it seems to be certain that the private banks cannot long resist the action of the Bank of England. It is very doubtful whether the advantage of a more immediate control over the circulation, which would result from substituting Bank of England currency for that of private banks, would not be more than outweighed by the increased difficulty of adjusting local currencies to the legitimate demand, and by the too immediate connexion of

the local business of the country with the incessant speculations and fluctuations of the London money market.

A more certain evil than the system of circulation seems to have been the undue multiplication of joint-stock banks conducted on unsound principles. The Bank of Manchester affords a striking instance of the mischief resulting from over-speculation in banking, and the ruin which has overtaken Paisley is another instance of the same effect.* There can be no doubt that the multiplication of joint-stock banks in the manufacturing districts in 1836, was one great cause of the inordinate speculation of that year, and of the reaction which never fails to follow such seasons of feverish prosperity. At the same time it is difficult to apply a remedy, as all banks are, from the nature of the case, *dealers in credit*, and credit is precisely the thing which is most liable to abuse, and most difficult to regulate. No act of Parliament can prevent speculation in a commercial country, and all that can be done is to avoid giving it an undue stimulus. With this view, the best thing would seem to be to endeavour to prevent speculators from setting up establishments for dealing in credit, unless they give a satisfactory guarantee—first, by the maintenance of a certain available reserve or safety fund: secondly, by becoming personally liable, and giving perfect publicity to the names of the directors and proprietors. The best practical security, both for the public and for the shareholders, must always consist in the knowledge that the business is conducted by men of wealth, integrity, and business habits, who have their all at stake in it. Some such reform in the constitution of joint-stock banks, making more effectual provision for the publication of the names of the responsible shareholders, and in the case of private banks of the partners, together with a periodical *bonâ fide* statement of the liabilities and assets of the concern, appears the best remedy against over-speculation in banking and reckless management.

CHAPTER V.

EMIGRATION.

When we consider the question of emigration in a general point of view, it must be evident that it is, of all others, the most important, and most intimately connected with the destinies of the English nation. The appointed mission of this nation evidently is to people the boundless regions of America and Australia with

* The Bank of Manchester appears in the course of five or six years to have sunk at least 1,500,000*l.* in what may be called bubble manufacturing speculations, which have only served to aggravate the evils of competition and over-production.

a race of men professing the purest religion, inheriting the richest literature and proudest history, and endowed by nature with the largest share of personal energy, perseverance, moral courage, self-command, habits of order and industry, and, in a word, possessing the highest degree of aptitude for practical civilisation, of any race which the world has yet seen. Already the flood of Anglo-Saxon population sweeps westward across the continent of America like a great tide, swallowing up the solitary prairies, and conquering every year from the Indian and the buffalo, a wide belt of six or seven miles along the line from the Rio Grande to Lake Huron. Already the outposts of the Australian continent are securely occupied, and the seeds of future empires planted in New Zealand, Van Dieman's Land, and wherever a favourable situation presents itself to British enterprise. The uneasiness and distress at home, the pressure of population on employment, the wonderful discoveries in science, and even the mechanical tendency, money-making spirit, and restless discontent of the age, are, to the eye of a philosophical observer, so many incentives and aids in the accomplishment of the two great missions of the English race—first, that of filling new worlds with a civilised and Christian population; secondly, that of bringing the religion and civilisation of Europe in contact with the stationary forms of society and religion which have existed for so many centuries in the ancient East.* Nor can it be well doubted that it is in a wise co-operation with these great designs of Providence that we are most likely to find a solution of our social difficulties, and relief from the evils which oppress us. When we descend, however, from these general considerations to practical details, the subject of emigration is surrounded with many difficulties, and it must be at once admitted that no feasible scheme has yet been suggested by experienced practical men, for conducting emigration on the extensive and systematic scale which would be required in order to make a sensible impression on the mass of distress at home.

The first point for inquiry is, what emigration has hitherto done, and what it is now doing. This will be seen at a glance from the following tables compiled from the Parliamentary Returns:—

Population of Great Britain,	1821	14,391,631
Ditto ditto	1831	16,539,318
	Increase	2,137,677

* The progress of British commerce, stimulated by the increasing difficulty of finding a market for its produce, has led, within the last few years,—first, to throwing open India to private adventure; secondly, to the war with China and opening of that extensive empire to commercial intercourse; results which carry with them the germ of revolutions so extensive, that the destinies and distresses of this little corner of the globe sink into comparative insignificance.

Emigrated in 10 years, 1821—1831	145,857	
Population of Great Britain, 1831.....		16,539,318
Ditto ditto 1841.....		18,540,682
Increase.....		2,008,264
Emigrated in 10 years, 1831—1841	460,278*	

The following is the official return of the number of emigrants who embarked from Great Britain in the years 1839, 1840, and 1841, with their destinations :—

	1839.	1840.	1841.
Sydney	8,455	7,310	15,278
South Australia.....	4,856	2,538	175
Port Philip	1,161	3,473	7,688
Van Dieman's Land.....	328	299	806
Western Australia and Swan River	268	224	357
Australia, destination unknown	718		
Total Australia.....	15,786	13,854	24,304
United States	33,536	36,555	41,124
North American Colonies	12,658	8,358	14,075
New Zealand.....	..	1,458	3,902
Cape of Good Hope and Africa	227	324	433
British West Indies, &c.....	..	1,432	2,004
Total.....	62,207	62,024	85,842†

The result is, that about one-fifth of the annual increase of population has been disposed of by emigration, of whom, in round numbers, two-thirds go to America, and one-third to Australia. Under the present system of leaving emigration entirely to be regulated by the laws of demand and supply, and by private enterprise, there seems no reason to expect that this amount of emigration will be very materially increased.‡ The highest estimate given by competent authorities of the number of able-bodied labourers who could be absorbed by the legitimate demand for labour in Canada in a year, does not reach 10,000,

* These numbers being taken from the Custom-house Returns, which, before the passing of the acts regulating the passage of emigrants, were imperfect, are probably below the mark, but the error is not great. The annual average number of emigrants from the United Kingdom for the twelve years ending 1837, according to the Report of the Agent-General for Emigration, was 57,000.

† The rate of emigration in 1841 to Australia has not been continued. Only 4097 emigrants to Australia and New Zealand left the United Kingdom in the half-year ending 5th July, 1842, against 14,552 during the corresponding period of 1841. The emigration from Ireland in 1841 was 32,428, of whom three-fourths went to the North American colonies.

‡ At the present rate, nearly one-third of the annual increase of population in Great Britain is absorbed by emigration, and, by degrees, this proportion may become larger; but there is no prospect of the amount of emigration ever approaching the whole annual increase of population.

and with the present amount of emigration there are frequent symptoms of the labour-market in the North American colonies being overstocked.* Sir Charles Bagot, in his last despatch on the subject, observes, with reference to the emigration of 1841, "that great difficulty had been found in procuring employment for emigrants who came merely as labourers, without any previous knowledge of agriculture, or of any mechanical trade. Under ordinary circumstances, the demand for unskilled labour is exceedingly small, and I should be disposed to dissuade rather than encourage the emigration of that class." In New Brunswick the governor has been compelled to warn emigrants not to expect employment in that colony.† Even in the United States the demand for unskilled labour is frequently outstripped by the supply; and, no later than last year, the Irish Emigrant Society of the city of New York published an address to their countrymen, cautioning them against embarking for the Atlantic cities without adequate resources. In considering emigration also as a source of relief to the labouring classes of Great Britain, we must bear in mind that the competition of Irish labour is felt in America as well as at home, and that more than half of the demand for unskilled labour which exists both in Canada and the United States is absorbed by the supply from Ireland.‡ On the whole, we may safely take it for granted, that without the assistance of the government, either by creating an extraordinary demand for labour by public works, or by locating settlers upon unoccupied lands, the North American colonies cannot, for several years to come, absorb an emigration of above 50,000 souls, equivalent to a supply of 12,000 or 15,000 able-bodied labourers, annually; and of this at least two-thirds may be calculated upon as supplied by Ireland.

The amount of emigration to Australia, has, as we have seen, not exceeded one-fourth of that to America; and we have the opinions of the local authorities that an annual supply of 8000 to 10,000 persons is sufficient to meet the demand for labour in the most important settlements. Sir George Gipps, the governor-general of New South Wales, has declared that "a well regulated immigration of from 8000 to 10,000 souls is what he consi-

* The total emigration to all the North American colonies in 1841, from the United Kingdom, did not amount to 40,000 persons, which is scarcely equivalent to 10,000 labourers.

† "I am bound to observe that the expected arrival of a number of indigent emigrants from Europe, and especially from Ireland, is regarded with great apprehension, as calculated to aggravate the public distress so generally prevailing."—*Governor Sir W. Colebrooke to Lord Stanley, 29th March*, 1842. *Emigration Papers*, 1842, p. 334.

‡ Of 322,291 emigrants who landed at Quebec from 1829 to 1841, England and Wales furnished 74,073, Scotland 41,426, and Ireland 202,855.—*Emigration—Canada. Parliamentary Papers*, 1842.

ders essential for the prosperity of the colony;" and when the amount rose last year to 22,000, the danger to the colony, from the excessive influx of emigrants, appeared so great to the authorities at home, that Lord John Russell, and his successor, Lord Stanley, wrote in the strongest terms to the governor, to censure him for the indiscriminate issue of bounty orders to persons undertaking to import emigrants, and even prohibited, by notice in the *Gazette*, the sailing of any more ships* with bounty emigrants.

To Van Dieman's Land emigration was for several years suspended, owing to the opinion of the local authorities that no adequate demand existed for labour, and it is only now recommencing on a very limited scale. Sir J. Franklin, in a despatch dated December, 1841, observes, "that the present state of the colony does not require, nor indeed could it bear, a large and indiscriminate influx of labourers;" and he recommends that not above "500 thorough-bred farm labourers, and 400 or 500 female servants of good characters should be sent to the colony."† In South Australia, the rapid increase of the first few years has received a sudden check, and we find, from the parliamentary inquiry, that it had actually become necessary to resort to a description of poor's rate in order to support a large number of independent labourers;‡ and that it was a general opinion that an extraordinary government expenditure was required to find employment for the labour already in the settlement. From later accounts it would appear that the colony is slowly recovering from the state of bankruptcy into which it was plunged by inordinate speculation and fictitious prosperity; still there is no likelihood that, for many years to come, there will be an effective demand for more labour than would be supplied by the annual introduction of 2000 or 3000 emigrants. To Western Australia one ship only has been yet despatched, although the Emigration Commissioners have surplus funds from land sales in the colony at their disposal, in consequence, as they say, "of a warning received from the governor against a too rapid introduction of labour into a colony where there is no large accumulation of capital applicable to its remuneration."§

New Zealand has, during the last two years, succeeded to South Australia as the scene of what may be called colonial gambling, and the stream of emigration has been diverted from Adelaide to Auckland and Port Nicholson: still, however, the whole number

* Emigration Papers, 1842, p. 1. Report of Emigration Commissioners, 1842, p. 17.

† In the end of 1841, out of a population of 15,000, as many as 1200 were living as paupers upon public support.

‡ Emigration Papers, 1842, p. 120.

§ Report of Emigration Commissioners, 1842, p. 18.

who went from this country in the year 1841 did not amount to 4000 persons. When we consider that New Zealand has no extensive pastures, and no valuable staple product affording an inducement to the capitalist to settle there, after the fever of speculation has subsided,* it appears certain that this amount of emigration will not be exceeded for several years to come, and more than probable that it will not be maintained. On the whole, therefore, if we set down the annual amount of emigration to the Australian colonies, including New Zealand, at a third of that to America, or at about 20,000 persons, we shall make a liberal allowance for all that is likely to take place for the present under the existing system.

It has been said, however, that the discovery of what has been somewhat pompously announced as a new principle in the theory of colonisation, is likely to lead to results far beyond any thing that has been hitherto witnessed. This principle, which was first propounded by Mr. Wakefield, consists in the attempt to unite the interests, and proportion the supply of capital and labour, in a new colony, by affixing an artificial price to land. The chief obstacle to the introduction of capital into a new settlement consists, it is said, in the limited supply, and the exorbitant price, of labour. This, again, arises from two causes; first, the want of means on the part of the unemployed labourers at home to transport themselves to a distant colony; secondly, the abundance of unoccupied land, by which the labourers who arrive are tempted to exchange their condition for that of independent proprietors. The remedy proposed for both these evils is, to fix a comparatively high price for land, and to apply the proceeds in importing labour. By this means, it is strenuously maintained, all the evils attendant on early colonisation will be avoided; a complete society, including within itself capital, intelligence, and all the elements for profitable production, will be at once transported to the wilderness, instead of growing up slowly and painfully; emigration will go hand in hand with the natural influx of capital towards a new and profitable field of investment; and the importation of labour will be carried on as a mercantile speculation to an unlimited extent.

These are certainly brilliant results to be attained by the simple process of *monopolising* land, for, in the last analysis, the discovery amounts to nothing more. The practical result of the experiment in South Australia makes it superfluous to pursue the subject further, and to enter upon the details into which the main

* See Terry's *New Zealand*. The unbridled spirit of speculation which ran up the price of allotments in Adelaide and Auckland to 1000*l.* an acre and upwards, reminds us of the days of the South Sea Company, or Mississippi scheme. The ephemeral prosperity of these new settlements is supported for a time solely by the expenditure of the capital brought by emigrants.

theory has been expanded with an affectation of mathematical precision.* It is no doubt true that the unoccupied land of a colony constitutes a fund which ought to be applied conscientiously for the benefit of the colony, and not jobbed away in lavish grants, or wasted in useless expenditure. It is also true that one of the most beneficial purposes for the general interests of the colony to which the funds realised from land sales can be applied, is the importation of emigrants, and that under particular circumstances this object may become of paramount importance. To this extent we cordially subscribe to the doctrines of the Wakefield school; and although they have no claim to be considered as discoveries, we admit that great good has been done by the discussion which has forced them on the notice of the public and of the government. But the idea of a theorist at home fixing the precise proportions between capital, labour, and land, in South Australia, and determining, by a sort of mathematical calculation, the best possible price at which a given lot of land shall be sold in New Zealand, is simply an instance of the self-sufficient pedantry of political economy, and it is ridiculous to talk of it as founding a new era in colonisation. Indeed, the fundamental assumption, that the preservation of a strongly marked line of distinction between the class of capitalist and labourer is essential to the prosperity of a colony, is only true very partially. In an agricultural colony nothing is more desirable than that which it is the especial object of the Wakefield system to prevent—the formation of a body of small independent cultivators.† It is only where a colony is fitted by nature for the production of some valuable staple product, such as the wool of Australia, which affords ample scope for the profitable investment of capital on a large scale, that the system has a chance of success.‡ Admitting, which is the utmost that can be said, that the *indirect* method of raising the

* Those who wish to pursue the subject in its details will find it very ably and dispassionately summed up in *Professor Merivale's Lectures on Colonisation*, Lecture XIII.—XVI. The science of colonisation embraces many interesting questions—such as the sale of lands at an uniform price or by auction; the application of the land-fund to roads, surveys, police, and other purposes beside emigration; the proper manner of providing for education and religious instruction, &c.—all of which are very important, but their discussion would lead us too far from the object of the present Essay.

† This was the early condition of the settlements in the United States, especially of those in New England. By far the soundest condition of a colony is when, as Lord Sydenham says in his correspondence relative to emigration—"it affords no lottery with a few exorbitant prizes and a large number of blanks, but a secure and certain investment, in which a prudent and reasonable man may safely embark."

‡ Unless this is the case, it will be impossible to find purchasers at a high price. In the North American Colonies, the vicinity of the United States is a complete check on any attempt to raise the price of land above its real value, which, where land is abundant, must always be very low.

price of land is an improvement on the *direct* method formerly practised, of leaving each individual capitalist to import labourers for himself under engagements to work for him for a stipulated time, it can scarcely be maintained that the difference between the two methods, which are the same in principle, is so great as to lead us to expect results on a totally different scale from any thing that has been hitherto witnessed.

Even if the amount of emigration under the system of private enterprise was vastly greater, it would still be of very limited use as a means of relieving the mother country, for this obvious reason, that the class of emigrants will always be taken principally from the very part of the same population whom it would be desirable to retain. The demand in the colonies is for men of more than average intelligence, energy, and good conduct; and parish paupers are as much a drug in Australia as in Kent or Sussex. The following passage from a report by Colonel Gawler, the Governor of South Australia, is adopted by the Emigration Commissioners and by the Colonial Secretary, as an expression of their views respecting pauper emigration :— "For the clearing of a new country, and the labours of a new settlement, energy of mind and body are especially required; while the unhappy beings to whom I have referred generally possess none of either, and their minds are also but too frequently as demoralised as their bodies are weak. After being thrown on our shores they remain a burden and disgrace to society, hopeless in themselves and in their offspring, who frequently inherit their vices, their debility, and their diseases."* So strongly has the evil resulting from the arrival of emigrants in a state of destitution been felt in the North American colonies, that a poll-tax on all emigrants landing in the settlement has been imposed, even at the time when the utmost desire existed to promote emigration. Under the present system, the bulk of the emigrants proceeding to Australia, and a large proportion of those going to Canada, will always be persons possessing some capital, or capable of earning high wages if they had remained at home, and, therefore, the large export of British manufactures to some of the new settlements is not to be taken as clear gain, since an amount nearly, if not quite, corresponding must be deducted from the home consumption. It is even a serious question, whether the rapid increase in the relative amount of destitution, during the last ten or fifteen years, may not have been partly occasioned by the constant drain of the best and most energetic portion of the population going on under the system of private emigration.† Be this as it may, it is clearly the duty of the government to

* Papers, relative to emigration from Cork Union, Poor-law Report, 1841, Appendix C. No. 7.

† "One great cause of the destitution in the Highlands is, that the present system of emigration has taken away the able-bodied, and left the old and in

afford every reasonable facility to private emigration, and to treat every portion of the British empire, however remote, as an integral part of the same family. To the extent to which it is the interest of a colony to import labour, and the interest of labour to transfer itself to the colony, there can be no question that the government ought to encourage emigration, both by applying the public resources of the colony in the most efficient and economical manner, and by removing obstacles at home arising from ignorance, prejudice, and timidity.*

But with a view to the object of our present inquiry, viz., the providing a sensible remedy for existing distress, it is evident that emigration, if applicable at all, must be taken up by the government on an extensive scale. The question is, whether any such system of wholesale emigration under government auspices is practicable or desirable. To this question we fear it is not yet possible to return a satisfactory answer. Every great experiment of the sort must be, in a great measure, tentative; and success is only purchased by a series of partial failures. In the meantime we will confine ourselves to a few general considerations which appear to enter as principal elements in the problem proposed for solution:—

1. It is evident that any extensive and systematic emigration, undertaken with a view to the relief of large masses of distress, must provide for settling the emigrants upon allotments of land, as well as for transporting them to the colony. The inevitable effect of landing a large body of destitute emigrants in any one of our colonies, and leaving them to chance to find employment and subsistence, would, as we have already seen, be most disastrous for all parties.

2. It is evident also, that any such emigration must be directed to the North American colonies, the length of the passage, and the nature of the soil and climate, being conclusive arguments against the possibility of any other system of colonisation in Australia, than that which at present prevails.

3. The expense per head of removing a mass of emigrants to Quebec, Cape Breton, or Prince Edward's Island, is calculated by experienced witnesses at about 4*l.*, and to Upper Canada, from 5*l.* 10*s.* to 6*l.*† The cost of maintaining a family of four

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firm, the young and helpless, and the very poor.—*C. R. Baird, Esq., Committee on Emigration, Scotland*, p. 49.

* With this view the passing of the Colonial Passenger's Act, and the establishment of the Board of Emigration Commissioners and of emigration agents at the different ports, and in the colonies, are highly proper measures. The *colonies* seem to have little more to desire from the government in the way of emigration, unless it be the devotion of a larger portion of the land-fund to the conveyance of emigrants. If any thing further is to be done, it must be with a primary view to the interest of the mother-country.

† See Evidence of J. Bowie, Esq., before the Committee on Emigration from the Highlands, Session, 1841, p. 15. His estimate is 4*l.* 1*s.* 7*d.* in the former

persons going on an allotment of land, until they could support themselves, has been estimated at 15*l.*,* but this is evidently far below the mark, as it supposes the emigrant to raise a crop in the autumn of the year of his arrival sufficient to support his family during the winter. This might be occasionally done under favourable circumstances, but as a general rule it would be necessary to provide for his support for a twelvemonth at least, and to give some assistance in raising a log-hut and clearing a little ground to begin with. On the whole, we should be inclined to estimate the cost of removing a mass of population and locating them upon land in Canada, at about 15*l.* a head, or 75*l.* for a family of five persons ;† but at this rate there appears to be no *physical* difficulty in the way of transporting a large number of families, and placing them in situations where, with prudence and good conduct, they would be certain to do well. When we consider that a sum of 20,000,000*l.* was cheerfully granted to emancipate 800,000 negroes, it is evident that the pecuniary part of the question presents no insuperable obstacle.

4. Much more serious difficulties, however, are presented by the moral certainty that the class of persons whom we should be most desirous to get rid of are utterly unsuited for emigration. The passage already quoted from Colonel Gawler's despatch is applicable, to the fullest extent, to the life of the Canadian backwoodsman. Any attempt to operate directly on the mass of dissolute pauperism in the agricultural counties, or of destitution and

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case, and 5*l.* 11*s.* 7*d.* in the latter, founded on a detailed calculation, including provisions and clothing for the voyage.

* Evidence of T. Rolph, Esq., Emigration Agent for Canada, before the same committee.

† The expense of locating emigrants upon lands in Canada is the subject of a detailed Report from the Commissioners of the British American Land Company, given in Appendix No. 2, to the Report of the Committee on Emigration in Scotland. The following is an abstract of their estimate :—

	£	s.
Dwelling-house of logs, with stone chimney, &c., 20 feet by 16	10	0
Clearing and preparing for crop four acres	12	0
Seed : wheat, barley, oats, and potatoes	5	10
Tools and implements for settler, &c.	6	0
Necessary expense for a family	£33	10

To this is added as desirable but not necessary :—

	£	s.
A cow	6	5
Two pigs	1	0
Additional clothing for winter	2	10
	£9	15

Making the total expense for a family, 43*l.*5*s.*, exclusive of the expense of transport from Britain to the location, which is estimated at 27*l.* for each family. This shows clearly that the total expense of settling a number of poor families *comfortably* would not exceed 14*l.* or 15*l.* per head.

vice in the large towns and manufacturing districts, would infallibly lead to disappointment; and even the respectable manufacturing operative is, generally speaking, disqualified, by physical weakness and sedentary habits, from attempting, with any prospect of success, the enterprise of emigration.*

5. Even supposing emigration on a large scale to be practicable, it is certain that, unless combined with other measures by which the standard of the home population was permanently raised, the vacuum created would be speedily filled up, and the redundancy of unemployed labour be as great as ever. This is fully proved by the example of Ireland, from which country a more extensive emigration has been kept up for many years, than from any other country of Europe.† A remarkable instance of the little effect of emigration in diminishing pauperism, is given by Mr. Tufnell, the assistant poor-law commissioner, in a late report on the counties of Kent and Sussex. He mentions the Rye Union, and several other districts, from which as large a proportion as one-eighth of the whole population has been removed within a few years by emigration, without any sensible effect in diminishing either the progress of population or the amount of pauperism, and concludes that "the above facts seem to prove the entire hopelessness of any attempt to benefit the country by any general or comprehensive system of emigration."‡

The result of these considerations certainly is to prove that emigration alone promises no panacea for existing evils, and that very great caution must be used in attempting any innovation on the present system. At the same time, we cannot resign ourselves to the conclusion, that any more general and comprehensive system of emigration than has been hitherto attempted is visionary and impracticable. The truth appears to be, that while emigration is advocated simply as a matter of profit and loss, and regarded as

* The Report of the Hand-loom Commissioners appear decisive on this head. The men themselves seem to be generally aware that they are not qualified to succeed as emigrants; and lately, during the existence of the most extreme distress at Paisley, two vessels sent by the emigration commissioners to the Clyde, to carry emigrants gratis to New Zealand, found great difficulty in completing their numbers, scarcely any applicants coming forward from the manufacturing districts. A few weavers might possibly succeed as shepherds in Australia, and the remnant of the class of half-agricultural weavers might furnish a few fit subjects for emigration, but generally speaking this resource seems to be quite out of the question for a population bred to manufactures.

† Humboldt estimates the emigration from Ireland in twenty years, from 1801 to 1821, at one million.

‡ Population of Rye Union in 1831, 11,418; removed by emigration in five years ending 1841, upwards of 12,000; population in 1841, 11,792. Amount of poor-rate in 1837, 6710*l.*; ditto in 1841, 8177*l.* In the parish of Ewhurst an emigration of one-fourth of the population between 1831 and 1841, left the population within thirty-seven of the original amount (1200 in 1831, 1163 in 1841), and the poor-rate at 20*s.* per head.—*Appendix to Eighth Annual Report of Poor-law Commissioners*, p. 142.

a cheap and convenient mode of shoving misery out of sight, it is not calculated to answer the selfish ends of its promoters. But if it were taken up in a spirit of charity, and as part and parcel of a comprehensive scheme for raising the condition of the poorer classes, and prosecuted by the government and society from a sense of duty rather than of self-interest, there seems every ground for hoping that emigration might become an instrument of great good, not only to the colonies, but to the mother country. If the owners of estates, for instance, where the agricultural population is clearly redundant, were, with a disinterested view to the good of their dependants, to assist them in emigrating, and if the government was, under proper guarantees, and with proper discrimination, to co-operate in the enterprise, there seems no doubt that much practical good might be accomplished. Colonies, like those of the Glengarry Highlanders, might be planted in the North American settlements with every prospect of success; indeed with the certainty that those who, if they had remained at home, would have been squalid paupers, will, in a few years, become a body of respectable freeholders, and an important acquisition to their adopted country.* By the same process the condition of those at home might be greatly ameliorated, provided active steps were taken by the landlord to eradicate the evils which had led to the multiplication of a pauper population. In the instances quoted by Mr. Tufnell no such steps appear to have been taken, and the reason assigned for the inefficacy of the large emigration to repress pauperism is, that "no sooner does a married couple depart, than its cottage is instantly taken by another couple, who are most likely only waiting for a habitation to get married." This evidently would not apply to an emigration conducted from the Highlands or Ireland, in conjunction with intelligent and benevolent proprietors, whose object was to limit the population on their estates, with a view to elevating its character and improving its condition.

On the whole, we think that the government might, with great propriety, commence the experiment of systematic emigration, by acting on the evidence contained in the Report of the Select Committee of 1841 on Emigration from the Highlands of Scotland. It appears that the Hebrides and Western Highlands contain a population of about 120,000, of whom nearly one-half may be considered as absolutely redundant, and who exist in a state of hopeless and progressive destitution. They are a class

* The services of the Glengarry settlers, during the late insurrection in Canada, are well known. They afford an instance of the complete success of the emigration of a large body of men accompanied by their natural guides and protectors of the upper classes. This is an important element in the success of any comprehensive system of emigration. Every considerable body of emigrants should be accompanied by their clergyman and schoolmaster, and, if possible, by one or two persons of the upper class, to whom they are attached, and in whom they have confidence.

of men well fitted to succeed as emigrants in Canada, where many of their countrymen have already settled, and risen to a state of independence and comfort. Numerous instances can be produced in which the experiment of an extensive emigration from particular estates and islands has been attended with the most complete success, both for the emigrants, the proprietor, and the remaining population.* The proprietors, however, as a body, are impoverished by circumstances over which they have no control, and are unable to bear the whole expense of such an emigration as would be requisite to place the population of the district on a sound and healthy footing.† Here, then, appears to be a case in which the experiment of a systematic emigration under government auspices might be tried with every prospect of advantage. The total number to be conveyed across the Atlantic is not so great as to make the experiment very hazardous, and the portion of the expense to be borne by the public would not be more than is frequently squandered on the most insignificant objects. Under any circumstances, the result could scarcely fail to be the rescue of many thousand of poor creatures from a situation of hopeless misery, and a most valuable accession to our knowledge in the important science of emigration. A great

* The following may be quoted as a contrast to the case of the Rye Union described by Mr. Tufnell. The little island of Canna contained a population of five hundred persons, living in a state of great wretchedness, when it was bought by the present proprietor, Mr. Macniell. He immediately shipped off two hundred of them, at his own expense, to Canada, where they have done exceedingly well, and built cottages, laid down strict rules, prohibited subletting and squatting on the land, would not suffer more than one family to live in the same house, and allowed no public-house in the island. The result is, that the people are "in a most happy and flourishing state, and quite different from the general state of the Highlanders on the west coast."—*Report of Committee on Emigration—Scotland.* This is only one instance of what has been frequently done, and might be done to-morrow on almost every estate in the West Highlands and in Ireland.

† It is sometimes said that the landlords ought to bear the *whole* expense of clearing their estates. This is hardly fair, when we consider that they have the legal right of ejecting their tenants, and that society shares in the profit of converting paupers into useful citizens. At any rate, it is good policy not to go too closely to work, and to co-operate where a fair case is made out for assistance. As a rough estimate, it has been stated, that if the government would advance one-third of the expense, the colony would contribute another third, and the landlord the remaining third. If he did so, and became responsible for the maintenance of all subsequent poor on his estate, by consenting to a poor-law, it would be advisable not to press for more. The Highland proprietors are generally impoverished by causes over which they have no control, and to say that they shall bear the whole expense of the requisite emigration is, in other words, to say that nothing shall be done.

It will not escape notice that precisely the same principles are applicable to Ireland, and that emigration from the Hebrides may be looked upon as preliminary to the far more extensive and important experiment of attempting, by a systematic emigration, to improve the condition of that unfortunate country.

writer has said, "Do the duty that lies nearest to thee, and already, in so doing, thy next duty will have become clearer."* This sentence should be inscribed in letters of gold over the council-halls of kingdoms. Every step taken in advance with a good motive and in a right direction, clears away a thousand difficulties. When it is clearly seen that a measure will benefit *human beings*, and injure nothing but *abstract theories*, let the government strike boldly in, and the theories will soon vere round and prove that what has been done is right. This seems peculiarly applicable to the case of government emigration. Do not let the government risk the certain good that is effected under the present system by any hazardous experiment unsanctioned by experience; but, on the other hand, do not let them sink spell-bound under the influence of theories of *laisser faire*, and omit opportunities of doing practical good where it is in their power. Let them leave the principle of self-interest to do all the good it can, but remember that it can never be a substitute for the higher principles of duty and charity, and that emigration, like any other expedient for the relief of society, must be conducted in a disinterested spirit of enlightened benevolence, in order to accomplish its object.

CHAPTER VI.

POOR-LAWS.

The question of poor-laws may be considered in two points of view—first, as regards the general *theory* of public charity; secondly, as regards the *practice* in Great Britain, and more particularly as regards the practical administration of the new Poor-law. The first of these points may be shortly dealt with. It would be, at the present day, a waste of words to refute the doctrine of the Malthusian school, which denounces public charity as the principal cause of pauperism. The evidence collected by the Poor-law Inquiry Commissioners, and, above all, the instances of Scotland and Ireland, establish conclusively that something more is requisite to eradicate destitution than to refuse relief. On the contrary, we may assert, without fear of contradiction, that experience has fully proved that, where circumstances are in other respects similar, a greater amount, and more intense degree, of misery exists without a poor-law than with one. The amount of squalid misery, of extreme human suffering and degradation, is,

* Carlyle. Sartor Resartus.

as we have already had occasion to show, distinctly greater in Glasgow, Paisley, and Dundee, than in the worst manufacturing towns of England.* The wretchedness shown by Dr. Alison, in his work on the Scottish system of management of the poor, to exist in Edinburgh, has no parallel in any city of equal population where the right of destitution to relief is recognised; and the details given in the same work of the state of things in many of the rural districts, and in the smaller country towns, such as Dumfries and St. Andrew's, show a picture of society which cannot be designated as any thing less than an outrage on humanity and a scandal in a Christian age and country. The following extracts from the report of a committee of magistrates and clergymen of St. Andrew's may give an idea of the state of things which exists in a quiet country-town in an agricultural district, under the system which denies the obligation of the rich to relieve the poor.

In St. Andrew's, as in most other parishes of Scotland, the parochial guardians of the poor seem to have regarded pauperism as a *disease which they were bound to keep down* by every means in their power, and with this view they have reduced both the number of paupers admitted on the roll, and the amount of allowance, to the smallest possible limits.

More than half those on the roll receive less than 1*s.* a week, *from which sum they are required to provide themselves with food, clothing, fuel, and lodging.*

A considerable portion of those on the pauper roll are aged single women, who are left completely destitute. The allowance granted to paupers of this class rarely exceed 1*s.* per week, and is sometimes only half that sum. One or two scanty meals of porridge or potatoes, with now and then a little tea or thin broth, form the diet of a day with most of these people; and their feeble attenuated appearance bears sufficient testimony to the inadequate manner in which they are supplied with the necessaries of life. The rents paid by these poor persons are exorbitant, averaging about 34*s.* a-year for a single room. In only a few cases, less than one-fifth of the whole, do these persons receive the slightest assistance from their relations.

After commenting on this system of what they aptly call "protracted starvation," and showing that numbers of poor people in

* The fallacy of the notion that pauperism *originates* in the recognition of the claim of destitution to relief, is abundantly demonstated by the following history of a town where no such right is recognised:—"In 1816-17 distress in Glasgow was so severe that it was found necessary to raise a large sum by voluntary subscription. At that time 9653*l.* was distributed among 23,120 persons. In 1819-20 large distributions of clothing, meal, and fuel, were again made. In 1826-27 another period of great distress ensued, and about 9000*l.* was laid out in relief of destitution. In 1829, 2950*l.* for the like purpose. In 1832 the condition of the poor was most lamentable. About 10,000*l.* was then raised by voluntary subscription, and 8000*l.* under the Cholera Act. In the spring of 1837, 3072 persons were employed in road-making, and 18,500 were daily supplied with food at soup-kitchens; besides which, considerable sums were laid out in providing fuel and redeeming bedding and clothes from pawn."—*Sanitary Reports*, vol. ii., p. 167. Thus, it appears that in twenty years it has been necessary to appeal no less than six times to public subscription in order to save multitudes from dying in the streets from literal starvation.

the parish exist in a state of destitution, besides those to whom the pittance of public relief is doled out, the committee conclude, "that the facts elicited during this inquiry into the state of the poor in St. Andrew's abundantly prove the insufficiency and inequality of the system by which the Scottish poor is supported." The allowance "granted them falls miserably short of the sum necessary to support even a bare existence, and the burden of maintaining them lies to a great extent on the middle classes of society. If society is bound to support its poor, and infirm, and sick members, the burden ought undoubtedly to be borne by all, according to their several abilites; but it is a well-known fact, that in general the most able and wealthy are by no means the most charitable members of society: that, in fact, those by whom the poor are for the most part supported, are, comparatively speaking, a small minority, principally composed of the middling classes, and that not a little assistance is given them by those who are only a little better off than themselves. But, since all classes reap the benefits, they are all bound to bear the burdens of society, according to their moral abilities; and the only method by which the wealthy can be made to contribute, as a body, to the support of the indigent and infirm, is by a compulsory assessment."*

The example of Ireland might be adduced to confirm these results, and to show that the effect of a repudiation, on the part of society, of the duty of providing for its destitute members, has been to aggravate immensely the amount of misery, and to throw a far more oppressive and unequal burden on the community, in the form of vagrancy and beggary, than would have been imposed by the fullest recognition of the principles of Christian charity. In a country of simple manners, thin population, and where old kindly relations, or strong religious feelings, bind together the different classes of society into a happy and contented whole, poor-laws may be superfluous, and it is even possible that there may be particular parishes and remote rural districts in Scotland and Ireland where their introduction would, at the present day, do more harm than good; but, on the whole, nothing can well be clearer, than that the extension of the principle of the right of destitution to relief to both these countries has become a measure of imperative necessity.†

* This is incontestibly established by experience. Voluntary associations and subscriptions have been tried in all considerable towns of Scotland; and, in the words of the Kirk Session of Inverness, in recommending a legal assessment, "have *uniformly failed* of accomplishing the object they intended from the want of public support of sufficient *extent* and *permanency*."

† In Ireland the principle has not been recognised. The Irish poor-law has done little more than construct an expensive machinery for repressing pauperism by the terror of the workhouse, a principle manifestly inapplicable where a third of the population are starving for want of employment. The English

Thus far, then, there can be no great doubt about the *theory* of public charity. We may assume that, in opposition to the conclusions of Malthus, experience has fully shown the soundness of the principle, that society is bound to support its destitute members; and also, that this support can only be effectually administered by a compulsory assessment. This is the great leading principle of the English poor-law. It rests on the natural instincts of humanity, and on the precepts of every code of positive religion which has found acceptance with mankind. The opposite assertion, that charity is not a duty, but a criminal weakness, which defeats its own ends, and augments the suffering it professes to relieve, is the wildest paradox ever advanced under the disguise of a scientific discovery.

When we advance, however, a single step beyond this simple principle, we are met by perplexing difficulties. The counter-principle, "that the condition of those who live by charity must not be made more desirable than that of those who live by labour," stares us in the face, along with the facts, that fully a third of our population are unable to earn 10*s.* a week in exchange for unremitting toil, and that hundreds of thousands of weavers and other independent labourers think themselves happy if they can earn half that sum. If we were to carry out fairly the principle of public charity by extending relief, on tolerably easy terms, to all those who have a moral claim upon it—that is, to all those who, with an average degree of good conduct, are unable to support themselves and families in decency and comfort, we should have at least 4,000,000 of paupers on the roll, and see the poor-rate raised, at the very lowest figure, to 25,000,000*l.* a year. Nor is this all; it would be practically impossible to administer such extensive charity to the deserving, without throwing the door wide open to fraud, and without swamping the whole remaining independent labour of the country by the competition of semi-pauperised labour. In short, if we were to attempt to relieve the whole amount of existing destitution, by binding the State to give relief in all cases *in which the principles of Christian charity would induce a benevolent individual to give relief*

poor-law is framed on the principle that every one who chooses to look for work can find it; and it works well or ill in different localities, according as the actual state of things approximates to or recedes from this theoretical supposition. In Ireland and Scotland such a small proportion of the existing destitution originates in misconduct, that the workhouse system must clearly prove a failure, unless it be merely supplemental to an extensive system of out-door relief, and measures for finding employment for the people either at home or in the colonies.

We have seen with great pleasure the announcement that the government intend to take up the subject of Scottish poor-laws. Their efforts can scarcely fail to effect a great improvement in the present system, and to lead to beneficial results, even although the attempt to introduce a system, modelled on the English poor-law, should prove a failure.

if he had it in his power, the inevitable result would be, that in less than ten years half the kingdom would be reduced to the position of the parish of Cholesbury, in Buckinghamshire, which, shortly before the passing of the Poor-law Amendment Act, was actually given up to its paupers, the amount of poor-rate having risen beyond the value of the land.

It is evident, therefore, that any possible system of poor-laws in this country must be based on a compromise between the two principles, of charity, and of protection to independent labour and property, and must always be looked upon as a supplement to, and not a substitute for the active exercise of private charity, and the philanthropic efforts of individuals. Wherever the latter are wanting, and the neglect of duty, decay of religious feeling, inordinate passion for wealth, and other moral causes, acting in conjunction with great economical changes, disorganise the whole ancient frame-work of society, and stimulate an unnaturally rapid growth of population and increase of poverty and demoralisation, one of two results will inevitably follow. If the system of poor-laws leans to the side of severity, it will become, as in Scotland, an instrument of harsh and callous repudiation of the first duties of humanity, until destitution, abandoned to itself, acquires a virulence and intensity which threatens society with ruin. If, on the other hand, it leans to the side of laxity, the result will be, a progressive increase of poor-rates until the whole property of the country is in danger of being swallowed up, and the whole independent labour of being replaced by labour partly supported by public charity.*

The latter is the result to which things were fast approximating in the southern agricultural counties of England under the old poor-law. It is absurd to attribute, as many writers have done, to this law, the *creation* of the evils which grew up under its operation to such an enormous magnitude. The law was very much the same in 1750, when the whole amount raised for poor and county rates was only 730,000*l.*, as in 1818, when the sum expended for the relief of the poor reached the enormous sum of 7,870,801*l.*† The principal abuses of administration, such as the allowance system, were all forced upon the authorities by the progress of pauperism, and increasing numbers and sufferings of the poor during the war. The allowance system did not take

* This was the case in Rome in the days of the empire: independent labour had absolutely disappeared, and the whole free population was supported by doles of corn, &c.; in other words, by out-door relief.

† The enormous increase in the amount of the poor-rate only began with the period of the French war. In 1776, the result of a parliamentary inquiry gave the amount expended for the relief of the poor at 1,530,800*l.*; in 1786 the amount had slightly diminished; in 1801 it had risen to 4,017,871*l.*; in 1818 to 7,870,801*l.*; in 1833, the year before the passing of the Poor-law Amendment Act, it was 6,790,799*l.*

away the allotments and common rights of the cottager; it did not raise the price of his food beyond all proportion to the advance of wages; it did not break up the old system of hiring, banish the labourer from the farmer's house and table, and reduce him to the most unfavourable of all conditions, that of a hind hired from day to day; it did not draft him into the militia and initiate him into the licence and irregular habits of military life; it did not pass game-laws and custom-house regulations, tempting him to become a poacher or smuggler; it did not make it a crime to brew his own beer over his own fire, and give a bounty to the establishment of Tom and Jerry shops and gin palaces in every village and parish; it did not leave him without schools, without the rudiments of instruction; it did not oblige the squire of the parish to be an absentee, and the parson a pluralist; in a word, the abuses of the old poor-law did not *make* the agricultural labourer of England a demoralised pauper, but they *found* him so.* At the same time, it is clear that things had come to such a pass, that these abuses greatly aggravated the evils of pauperism, and that an effectual remedy had become necessary, not only to save the property of the country from impending ruin, but to give the agricultural peasantry of the southern counties of England a chance of regeneration, and to prevent them from sinking permanently into the condition of a set of dissolute, disorderly, unmanageable, bastard-getting, and beer-drinking parish paupers.

The new poor-law may be considered in two aspects:—first, as a complete reform in the mechanism and administration of the old system of poor-laws: secondly, as a decided change in the principle of the law itself, by substituting, to a great extent, the principle of "protection to independent labour and property" for that of "charity." These two measures were not necessarily connected, and they may, to a certain extent, be considered separately. The administrative reform, which substituted the board of guardians for the parish overseer and justice, and which subjected the whole local management to the supervision and control of an effective centralisation, must be admitted to be a great improvement, whatever we may think of the change introduced at the same time into the principle of the law itself. The glaring abuses of the old system, the parochial jobbing and corruption, the evils of the law of settlement, the enormous amount of litigation, the fraudulent attempts to make the rate-payers pay the wages of labour, the scandalous laxity of workhouse discipline in some districts, and

* The causes which led to the progressive demoralisation of the peasantry in the rural districts of England are summed up, with great force, by one whose powers of observation will not be doubted, and who describes what he sees around him in his daily experience—the poet Cowper.—See the *Task*, "Reflections on Winter."

equally scandalous severity in others, the direct bounties offered on bastardy and demoralisation, have been eradicated with a firm and vigorous hand, and no one can deny that great intelligence and energy have been shown by the poor-law commissioners in carrying into practical operation the ideas upon which the legislature proceeded in passing the new law.* This alone is a great step in advance. A successful experiment has been made in the great problem of uniting the principles of centralisation and localisation, and of constructing an administrative machine by which the ideas of the ruling class are brought into immediate contact with the most important every-day interests of the community.† Be these ideas right, or be they wrong, one thing is clear, that the only hope of effecting peaceful improvements in our social condition, is by realising the ideas of its most intelligent members, and that the worst of all possible governments, is that which cannot find the means to carry its views into practical operation.

In this point of view the organisation of the new poor-law system appears admirable. Assuming that the legislature adheres to the ideas respecting the administration of relief upon which the Amendment Act was founded, it is difficult to conceive a more efficient instrument for carrying these ideas into practice than is furnished by the machinery of local boards of guardians, controlled by a central commission exercising a considerable latitude of discretionary power, and keeping up an effective supervision by means of a staff of assistant commissioners. Even if the ideas of the legislature were to change, the machinery would be invaluable, and might be worked with equal efficiency to carry out a system founded on very different principles.

In addition to this administrative reform, the Poor-law Amendment Act introduced a great change in the *principle* of the law. Under the old law, the principle of *charity* was, amidst many abuses and contradictions, the prevailing principle. It was assumed that relief was to be, in some measure, proportioned to desert, and that every industrious man of good character was entitled to a comfortable support for himself and family.‡ The

* In 1834 the amount expended in law charges connected with the relief of the poor was 258,604*l.*; in 1841 it was only 69,942*l.*

† The principle of centralisation and the machinery of the new poor-law have been extended with most beneficial results to other measures; as the registration of births and marriages, the promotion of vaccination, the education of pauper children, &c. We are also indebted to this machinery for the collection of sanitary reports and much valuable information containing the germ of many future reforms. In the condition in which the country now stands, it is clear that vigorous and extensive reforms can only be carried into effect by combining the energy and intelligence of a central authority with the action of local boards.

‡ The famous order of the Newbury magistrates, and the whole system of allowances to make up the deficiency in wages, originated in this feeling. We have had occasion to see that the *real* wages of agricultural labour fell consider-

workhouse, as a means of forcing the deserving poor to endure privations rather than receive relief, was unknown, and out-door assistance was given with reference, rather to the supposed wants of the applicant, than to the necessity of keeping down the burdens on property. The means of enforcing the assumed right to relief were prompt and efficient; so efficient, in fact, that they set at nought all attempts to enforce economy, or even to exclude fraud. The principle of administration was analogous to that of the criminal law, which holds it to be better, that "ten guilty should escape than that one innocent man should perish."

The new poor-law, on the other hand, proceeds distinctly on the opposite principle, that *poverty may be presumed to originate in misconduct, and must, for the interest of the community, be repressed by severity.* "The fundamental principle," the poor-law commissioners tells us, "of the new law is, that the condition of the pauper ought to be, on the whole, less eligible than that of the independent labourer;" and the refusal of out-door relief and stringent nature of the workhouse regulations, are expressly defended on the ground that a wholesome severity is essential to form the labouring classes to habits of industry, self-denial, and forethought. In short, as the earlier reports plainly say, the main object proposed by the law was "to depauperise England by the terror of the workhouse." This principle was not confined to the repression of able-bodied pauperism; on the contrary, in the report of the poor-law commissioners on the continuance of the poor-law commission, in 1840, we find them arguing against "the inexpediency and danger of acceding to the public feeling, which requires that, as regards the aged and infirm, the arrangements of the workhouses should be so modified as to place them on the footing of almshouses," and the regulations restricting the going out of the workhouse and providing for the separation of families, are expressly stated to have been issued with a view "to prevent those establishments from becoming *almshouses* instead of *workhouses,* in the proper meaning of the term."

The theory constantly laid down by the poor-law commissioners has been, that it was always possible for a labouring man to find employment at wages which would suffice, not only to support him and his family while in health, but also, by the exercise of a moderate degree of prudence and economy, to enable him to lay by a provision for sickness and old age; and, therefore, that the fact of applying for relief was in itself *primâ facie* evidence of such a degree of misconduct as warranted severity; and in ac-

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ably between 1780 and 1800; that is, that the amount of *money* wages did not rise at all in proportion to the rise in food, rents, and other necessaries; the consequence was, that out-door relief was resorted to as a means of staving off the consequence which was otherwise inevitable—viz., a permanent deterioration in the condition of the working classes.

cordance with this theory, it has always been assumed that a diminution of poor-rate was equivalent to a diminution of pauperism, and that the destitution which disappeared under the operation of the workhouse test was at once converted into independent labour. This theory, however, has only been strictly enforced in the case of the able-bodied poor. As regards the aged and infirm, notwithstanding the arguments of the commissioners against the almshouse system, the administration of relief has proceeded mainly on the old principle of alms-giving. There has been no systematic attempt to render the condition of the aged and infirm poor uncomfortable, with a view to hold them up *in terrorem* to the younger generation, and encourage habits of economy. On the contrary, out-door relief is freely given to this class of poor, and the workhouse is seldom resorted to except from choice, and is not designedly made a place of punishment.* Abuses no doubt still exist, and there are particular workhouses where, owing to the neglect of the guardians, and the misconduct of those entrusted with the management, deplorable scenes have taken place, and where the aged, infirm, and infant poor, have been exposed to cruel sufferings and oppression; but on the whole there is every reason to believe that these abuses occur less frequently, and are more promptly exposed, than under the old system. The balance of evidence clearly appears to substantiate that, on the whole, the aged and infirm poor are better off than under the old law, and that as regards them, the practice of the Amendment Act has been in direct opposition to its theory. The same is also probably true as regards the administration of medical relief and the education of pauper children, the imperfect administration and inveterate local abuses of the old system more than compensating for the greater laxity of its principle.

As regards the able-bodied poor, however, the most strenuous efforts have been made to carry out the theory of "depauperising England by the terror of the workhouse," to the fullest extent. With this view, the poor-law commissioners have steadily endeavoured to enforce two maxims:—1st, that no relief whatever is to be given to able-bodied labour out of the workhouse; 2nd, that the conditions of relief in the workhouse shall be rendered so unpalatable as to ensure that relief will never be sought unless under the pressure of extreme necessity. The latter object has been fully attained by enforcing the separation of families, strict discipline, meagre diet, and disagreable labour.

* Out of 787,888 aged, infirm, and infant paupers, 682,791 received out-door relief during the quarter ending Lady-day, 1841.—*Eighth Annual Poor-law Report*, p. 7. The aged and infirm poor who reside in the workhouse are treated in many respects on the *almshouse* principle; they are allowed tea, sugar, beer, and many other *comforts*, beyond the bare *necessaries* given to the able-bodied pauper.

Repeated instances have proved, that by these means the object of inspiring salutary terror of the workhouse has been completely attained, and that the able-bodied poor will undergo almost any degree of privation rather than take refuge within its walls. The great struggle, therefore, has been to enforce the first rule, that no relief is to be given to able-bodied adults out of the workhouse; and upon this point has turned, in fact, the question whether *want of employment at adequate wages is to be recognised as giving a title to relief*. During the first three years of the new law a variety of circumstances conspired to facilitate its introduction, and to confirm the faith of the public in the theory that every able-bodied man could find work if he pleased, and that pauperism was almost entirely the consequence of misconduct. The years 1834-7 embraced a period of abundant harvests and great commercial prosperity. The cheapness of food had given the labouring classes a great rise in real wages, and the excessive extension of manufactures and public works created an unusual demand for labour. Accordingly, when the new law was introduced in the southern counties, which were suffering most severely from the abuses of the old system, the effect was almost magical. Able-bodied pauperism was at once, according to the favourite phrase, absorbed, that is to say, removed from sight. Allowances in aid of wages were stopped, and, thanks to cheap food, railways, emigration, and migration to the manufacturing districts, no perceptible amount of starvation ensued, and no predial insurrection took place. The experiment of the new poor-law was looked upon as completely successful, and the refusal of out-door relief was proclaimed by a thousand voices to be the great discovery of the age, and the grand panacea for all the evils that afflict humanity. These illusions soon gave place to more sober views. The year 1837 closed the series of good harvests and commercial prosperity, and commenced a period which has lasted, with little variation, down to the present year, of severe depression in trade, accompanied by scanty crops and high prices. Under these circumstances the new Poor-law was suddenly arrested in its triumphant progress, and the commissioners had scarcely completed the task of bringing it into general operation before they found the fundamental principle of refusing out-door relief to the able-bodied poor, exposed to attacks from every quarter. In fact, the theory which connected poverty with misconduct became too demonstrably false to hold water any longer. While it was only applied to a few agricultural counties, where the surplus labour could be driven into the towns and manufacturing districts, it was possible for people to believe that the poverty which disappeared had been annihilated; but this was no longer possible when the law came to be extended to the populous districts and large cities, where misery presents itself in masses which cannot be concealed

from view. Nor was it possible for people to believe the theory, "that every able-bodied man can find work, and is able to support himself and family, and provide for his old age," who were in contact with thousands of operatives thrown out of employment by fluctuations in trade, and earning by their utmost exertions, when in full work, a miserable pittance barely sufficient to support life. Even in the agricultural districts the rise in the price of food soon reduced it to a matter of demonstration, that it was a physical impossibility for a labouring man, with a family, to lay by anything out of his wages. Accordingly, the theory by which the poor-law commissioners sought to justify the refusal of out-door relief has had to be given up, and this brought the measure itself into collision with the old humane feeling and newly-awakened religious spirit of the country, which revolted at the idea of abandoning the principle of charity. The commissioners have naturally been reluctant to admit the failure of the brilliant anticipations entertained during the first few years of the new poor-law, and they have struggled as long as possible against the undeniable fact, that the refusal of out-door relief is a harsh and cruel measure of self-defence against pauperism, which, if justifiable at all, can only be so on the ground of necessity. They have opposed a vigorous resistance to the demand for a relaxation of the principles which they believed essential for the defence of property and independent labour, and have defended the ground which they originally took up inch by inch. Notwithstanding all their efforts, however, the attempt to enforce the strict principles laid down in their reports has manifestly failed; and in the debates of the last session of parliament, the continuance of the commission was advocated on grounds totally inconsistent with the views originally entertained by the supporters of the new system, viz., that extensive out-door relief had been given, and that the condition of the aged and infirm poor had been improved.* The commissioners themselves, in their last report, scarcely attempt to conceal the fact that their principles have, to a great extent, turned out to be inapplicable. They admit "that the expenditure for the relief of the poor, which had diminished gradually in the three years immediately succeeding the passing of the Amendment Act, and reached its lowest point in 1837; has gone on regularly increasing since that year,"† which, they fear, "is partly attributable to the increasing laxity with respect to the able-bodied in some unions, and to a disposition to evade the prohibitory regulations of the commissioners." They state also, "with regret," that "the number of able-bodied paupers relieved in 577 unions has increased from 245,772, in the quarter ending Lady-

* See Sir J. Graham's speech on introducing the bill of last session.
† Eighth Annual Report of Poor-law Commissioners, p. 5—12.

day, 1840, to 285,090 in the quarter ending Lady-day, 1841;" and as, out of this number, 231,069 were relieved *out of the workhouse*, it is evident that the regulation prohibiting out-door relief to able-bodied paupers is like one of those old laws which figure in the statute-book, but are too contrary to the feelings of the community to be enforced. The expectation entertained during the first three years of the Amendment Act undoubtedly was, that the extension of the workhouse system would almost entirely obviate the necessity of giving out-door relief; that, in fact, pauperism would be so much diminished as to bring it within the compass of the newly-erected workhouses. The result, after seven years' trial, is, that out of 1,072,978 persons who receive relief, 159,118 only are relieved in the workhouse; and even with this number it not unfrequently happens that the workhouses are so crowded as to render it impossible to apply the test. When driven to the last extremity, pauperism has this resource, which cannot fail to ensure it the victory,—let it fill the workhouses, and the workhouse test is at an end. With a population of at least a million of paupers, and another million perpetually verging on destitution, it is impossible to eradicate pauperism by building workhouses to hold 200,000 persons. The system must end infallibly either in refusing relief altogether, or in giving out-door relief.

To a certain extent, therefore, we fully agree with the opponents of the new poor-law. We agree with them in thinking that the theory of the new law, as laid down by the legislature, and developed in the reports of the poor-law commissioners, is too wide a departure from the principles of Christian charity, and too great an advance towards what are called "Malthusian" principles—principles wrong in themselves, and quite inapplicable to the present condition of society in England. We agree with them that the attempt to carry these principles into full operation has proved a decided failure, and that the idea of eradicating poverty by the simple expedient of refusing out-door relief, is an utter delusion. We agree, also, that the result to which the theory of the new poor-law necessarily tends, viz., the refusal of relief altogether, is proved, by the example of Scotland and Ireland, to be, without exception, the worst possible result at which a civilised and Christian community can arrive. But we cannot agree in making the new poor-law responsible for the existing distress, or in thinking that its repeal would be the shortest and most effectual remedy for the evils under which we suffer.

In the first place, there is much truth in what was said by Sir J. Graham, "that the objections to the new poor-law are much more against what has been *said* than what has been *done*." The practice has not corresponded with the theory; and, indeed, with the exception of the case of able-bodied labour, it has never been

attempted to make them correspond. The relief to the aged and infirm has been, as we have had occasion to see, administered in a manner altogether inconsistent with the *principles* laid down by the commissioners. In the case of the able-bodied, also, the prohibition of out-door relief has not prevented it from being given to a quarter-of-a-million of persons in a single quarter.

In the next place, we must recollect, that not only was the administration of the old poor-law corrupted by a thousand abuses which have been eradicated by the new system, but also that its theory of charity was never attempted to be reduced to practice in more than half the kingdom. In the manufacturing districts and large towns, where the most intense distress exists, the principle that misfortune gives a title to effective relief was never acted upon. The most miserable classes of the population, the inhabitants of the cellars and lodging-houses, the filthy wynds and alleys of Liverpool and Manchester, the hand-loom weavers, the stocking-framers, the lace-makers, have not been much affected, either for the better or the worse, by the passing of the Amendment Act. Nor have the northern counties generally experienced much change, where employment for able-bodied labour is more abundant, and where the system of allowances in aid of wages was never general.

On the whole, we are inclined to think that the amount of good done by the new poor-law decidedly preponderates. It has eradicated inveterate abuses which stood in the way of any improvement in the condition of the labouring classes. It has restored the natural distinctions between idleness and industry, prudence and improvidence, which, under the old system, were almost annihilated. If it has failed in raising the wages of agricultural labour, it has not generally lowered them, and has, to a certain extent, increased employment. It has provided an effectual check against fraud and imposture, and has introduced an enlightened and uniform administration in place of the endless confusion of parochial jobbing. It has created a most effective and valuable system of machinery, which affords the means of carrying out systematic measures for improving the condition of the poor; and, finally, it has given the country a breathing-time for improvements, by arresting the progress of the poor-rate, which threatened to swallow up the whole independent property of the southern counties.

Against this must be set a considerable amount of suffering inflicted on the class of labourers with families, and labourers out of employment, who were in the habit of receiving allowances; a certain augmentation of the amount of unseen destitution in towns and manufacturing districts, by the absorption of labour under the terror of the workhouse;* and, lastly, a general feeling

* The success or failure of the new poor-law turns mainly on the question

of exasperation on the part of the lower classes, and shock given to the humane and religious feeling of the community by the enforcement of a system avowedly based either on the falsehood that the well-disposed can always support themselves by labour, or on the naked *Malthusian* principle that charity is a weakness, and not a duty.

The question is, how far these objections can be obviated without falling back into the evils of the old system. We have already stated our opinion that they cannot be completely obviated, and that, in fact, the best law of public charity, unless seconded by the efforts of the Legislature and of private benevolence, to stop the sources of destitution, will always find itself in the dilemma, either of refusing relief where it is morally due, or of sacrificing the independent labour and property of the country in a vain attempt to relieve an ever-increasing amount of pauperism. At the same time we think something might and ought to be done to mitigate the objections against the new poor-law. The moral sense of the community need not be alienated by Malthusian theories which are not carried out in practice. There can be no reason why the principle of charity should not be explicitly avowed in the case of the aged, infirm, and infant poor, and enforced by the authority and supervision of the commissioners. Much more of their supervision might be exerted in seeing that the workhouses are made comfortable to these classes—that their complaints are attended to—that persons of good character and humane disposition are selected as masters of workhouses—that the duty of relieving urgent destitution is not neglected;—in a word, that the law is, as far as possible, humanely administered. The Malthusian theories,* which teach that humanity is neces-

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of the amount of destitution that has been thus driven into large towns and thrust out of sight. That it has greatly increased since the introduction of the new poor-law we know from official accounts; but it is, of course, very questionable how much of this has been occasioned by the increased severity of the law in the country districts, and how much by the depression of trade and general progress of distress.

* It has been suggested to me, by an authority for which I have the highest respect, that I have been guilty of a confusion of terms in talking of a compulsory poor-law as founded on the principle of charity—that charity is in its essence entirely voluntary, and that the term ought to be confined to individual benevolence. I confess myself unable to agree with this reasoning. A poor-law appears to me to be in theory the embodiment of the feeling of the community, that it is a duty to relieve destitution. Suppose that I, from a sense of the duty of public charity, support by my vote and influence a system which imposes a tax of 10*l.* annually upon me for the relief of the poor, is this less charity than if I had subscribed the 10*l.* to an almshouse or hospital? Legal and individual charity operate in distinct spheres, and the one does not exclude the other, but rather, in an artificial and complicated state of society like the present, the one requires the assistance of the other, and is comparatively useless without it. Still the *principle* appears the same, the common feeling of humanity which is embodied in the precept of our Saviour, to "feed the hungry and clothe the naked," and in the command of Mahomet to his followers to

sary to repress population, and that the least relaxation of severity would lead the labouring classes to marry and beget children, *on the prospect of having them provided for in old age, by a pittance of parish pay or seat by the workhouse fire,* should be thrown overboard as utterly unsanctioned by experience ; and the result of a too rigid application of the principle of repression in Scotland should be kept constantly in view. As regards able-bodied poverty, the question is more difficult, for here the objection to giving relief consists not merely in the fear of increasing the growth of a pauper population, and swelling the burdens on property, but even more in the necessity of repressing fraud and idleness, and of protecting independent labour. While we admit the falehood of the theory that all able-bodied poverty originates in misconduct, and feel the harshness of refusing it relief, we are sensible that great caution must be used in recognising its claim, and relaxing the strictness of the commissioners' regulations.

To this class it is clear that the principle "of rendering the condition of the pauper worse than that of the independent labourer" must be rigidly applied; and for this purpose the workhouse must be made, to a certain extent, disagreeable. The question is, whether this is not carried too far, when we hear frequently of persons in extreme distress preferring the prison to the workhouse; and know, by experience, that multitudes live in the most extreme and abject destitution rather than resort to it.* The separation of families, in so far as it is resorted to, not as a measure necessary for preserving order, but, as the commissioners avow, *as a means of making the workhouse unpleasant,* appears a piece of extreme cruelty, and is evidently unequally oppressive upon the married poor, and the better class of appli-

give at least a tenth of their substance annually to the poor. The same authority has suggested to me that the term "Malthusian," which I have so frequently had occasion to employ, appears to convey a contemptuous and invidious sense. Nothing could be farther from my intention. I use the word "Malthusian," as I might the expressions "Benthamite, Puseyite, &c." as the shortest way of expressing a certain tendency of thought or sect of public opinion that I find *de facto* existing. If, owing to the peculiar nature of the doctrines that are commonly understood under the term "Malthusian," a certain degree of odium is attached to the word in minds of a certain description, I cannot help this, and am surely not responsible for using the word as I find it, without a long circumlocution each time to express my own precise views with regard to the opinions in question. As regards Malthus himself, I have already said, that I feel all the respect for him that is due to an honest and independent thinker, who, upon some points, brought to light important truths, and upon others pushed the circle of error round to its conclusion, and thus prepared the way for a sounder philosophy.

* This is peculiarly the case as regards large towns. Either the principle of a poor-law ought to be abandoned altogether, or some better provision than the present workhouse ought to be made for the extreme and urgent destitution that wanders houseless and foodless about the streets and open spaces of the metropolis and principal towns.

cants, who have preserved a sense of respectability and family affection. Labour and the restraints of discipline appear fair measures of repression towards the able-bodied poor, but the wanton separation of families goes far beyond this point, and is sufficient in itself to excite feelings of indignation against a system which resorts to expedients of obvious and undisguised cruelty. The experiment certainly ought to be tried, whether a sufficient terror of the workhouse to deter fraud and idleness cannot be maintained without measures of positive cruelty. The bastardy clauses of the new act also appear contrary to the common feelings of humanity, and are one great cause of the odium with which the new law is regarded in many parts of the country. The doubtful advantage of repressing a particular evil by terror, is always too dearly purchased by running counter to the plain and positive precepts of religion and human feeling. Under the old law the line was doubtless drawn too far on the side of lenity, or rather of positive encouragement to the mother of the illegitimate offspring; but, under the new law, the line is drawn at least as much too far on the other side.

It is well worth trying the experiment also, how far the out-door labour test, accompanied with relief in kind, may be substituted for the workhouse, especially as regards the deserving poor and those who have families. The principle of discrimination need not be entirely removed in country districts—in point of fact, it never is—and the discretion of the guardians should not be made to bend too rigidly to general rules and to the desire of uniformity, unless where it is quite clear that they are doing mischief on a large scale.* Even as regards out-door relief, unaccompanied by a labour test, the commissioners should recollect that they incur a heavy responsibility in standing in the way of the wish of the representatives of the rates-payers to give away their own money, and that the presumption certainly is, that the local authorities will not err on the side of excessive charity. They should remember also that the abuses of indiscriminate relief are not the sole evils to guard against, and that the destitution which figures in no official tables is not less real and alarming than that which meets the eye. They should remember that history would scarcely applaud their efforts if, by the terror of the workhouse, they were to succeed in extinguishing poor-rates and *depauperising England into the condition of Ireland.*

* For this reason we are disposed to hope that the Gilbert unions may not, for the present at least, be subjected to the operation of the New Poor-law. It is exceedingly desirable that ample opportunity should be afforded of trying the experiment of different systems on a large scale, before any one system is definitively enforced on the whole nation. It appears to be as yet a fair open question, whether the law does not, on the whole, work as well and satisfactorily in the Gilbert unions as in the unions subjected to the commissioners; and in a matter of this importance the legislature can hardly proceed with too much caution.

If these considerations are kept in view by the legislature, the commissioners, and those entrusted with the administration of the law, we see no reason to doubt that it may be made to work as well as any compromise that is practically possible in the existing condition of English society.*

CHAPTER VII.

BUILDING AND SANITARY REGULATIONS, &c.

The inadequacy of any system of public charity to grapple with an amount of destitution and demoralisation, so intense as that which we have seen to exist in the populous manufacturing districts and large towns, renders it imperative to resort to preventive measures, and to endeavour to cut off the causes of contagion in their source. Of such preventive measures, an effective law for enforcing a proper system of sewerage and drainage, and for improving the dwellings of the poorer classes, is at the same time the most obvious and the most urgent. The evidence extracted in a former part of this essay from the *Sanitary Reports* is conclusive, both as to the existence of abominations which are a disgrace to a civilised country, and as to the pernicious influence exerted on large masses of the population, by the neglect of all precautions on the part of the Legislature against the abuses of private property. With a strange inconsistency, while the right to offer unwholesome meat for sale in the public market has been denied, the right to offer not only unwholesome lodging, but lodging in which it is physically impossible that human beings can exist without disease and degradation, has never been called in question.† Mercenary speculators have been allowed *to do what*

* I have seen with great pleasure the alterations proposed to be introduced by Sir James Graham, on the part of the government, in the course of the present session. As far as I can judge from the general outlines of his scheme, it will obviate some of the worst objections against the present system, and go some way towards restoring a juster degree of equilibrium between the claims of destitution and the dangers of undue laxity.—Feb., 1844.

† "We forbid by law the selling of putrid meat in the market; why do we not forbid the renting of rooms in which putrid, damp, and noisome vapours are working as sure destruction as the worst food? Did people understand that they were as truly poisoned in such dens as by tainted meat and decaying vegetables, would they not appoint commissioners for houses as well as commissioners for markets? Ought not the renting of untenantable rooms, and the crowding of such numbers into a single room as must breed disease and may infect a neighbourhood, be as much forbidden as the importation of a pestilence?"—*Channing on the Elevation of the Working Classes.*

they like with their own—that is to say, to take advantage of the influx of population, in order to run up rows of wretched hovels, streets built back to back, without drains or sewers, courts and wynds without ventilation, cities without a playground or breathing place.* They have been allowed to crowd lodgers together pell-mell, without distinction of sex or age, to stow them away in cellars, to pack them five or six together in beds yet warm with the contagion of the typhus fever—in a word, to *work the mine of misery* as they could with most profit and least expense. In no particular have the rights of *persons* been so avowedly and shamefully sacrificed to the rights of *property*, as in regard to the lodging of the labouring class.† Every large town may be looked upon as a place of human sacrifice, a shrine where thousands pass yearly through the fire as offerings to the Moloch of avarice.

The remedy for these evils is obvious, if the Legislature has the courage to apply it. There would be no sort of difficulty in framing strict regulations enforcing drainage, sewerage, the removal of filth and refuse, the construction of proper privies and receptacles, the supply of water, the periodical inspection of houses, and

* Take the following account of Manchester :—" There are no public walks or places of recreation by which the thousands of labourers or families can relieve the tedium of monotonous employment. Pent up in a close dusty atmosphere from half-past five or six in the morning till seven or eight at night, from week to week, without change, without intermission, it is not to be wondered at that they fly to the spirit and beer-shops, and the dancing-house on the Saturday nights, to seek those, to them, pleasures and comforts which their own destitute and comfortless homes deny. With a teeming population, literally overflowing her boundaries, Manchester has no public walks or resorts, either for the youthful or adult portion of the community to snatch a moment's enjoyment. The prospect of obtaining any wide area to be appropriated as a public walk or otherwise for the use of the labouring classes becomes more remote each year, as the value of the land within and in the neighbourhood of the town increases." —*C. Mott, Esq., Sanitary Reports*, vol. i., p. 239.

† An instance of this has been already quoted, where the rental of a single proprietor has been increased within the last fifteen or twenty years from a few hundreds *to about* 12,600*l. per annum*, while during the same period a population of nearly 40,000 accumulated in the parish, who were allowed to live in a state of heathenism and debauchery, without a single sixpence being contributed by any owner of land towards schools, churches, hospitals, or any purpose whatever, connected with the moral, intellectual, or physical condition of this mass of population.—*See Report of T. Tancred, Esq., on Collieries and Iron Works in the West of Scotland.*

There is hardly a large town in Great Britain in which the rental of the land has not increased tenfold within the last fifty years, or in which *one-tenth part* of this increased value has been contributed to save the population *which created it* from pestilence and degradation. The dunghill described by Mr. Symonds in the centre of the Glasgow closes, " which is the most lucrative part of the estate of the laird, and which it would consequently be esteemed an invasion of the rights of property to remove," is a type of the system which has been acted upon in our large towns. This cannot and must not last. At all hazards the lesson must be taught, and practically enforced, that *property has its duties as well as its rights.*

condemnation of such as were obviously unfit for habitation; the licensing and strict regulation of lodging-houses, the separation of sexes, the prohibition of every thing that was obviously inconsistent with health and decency. In addition to these regulations, effective provision might be made, as regards future dwellings, for an improved construction, and as regards future streets and towns, for ventilation, drainage, and the preservation of open spaces and places of public amusement. Fever hospitals also might be erected in populous towns, and a strict sanitary supervision enforced, and all public nuisances vigorously repressed.*

It is useless to follow the subject into details, for the question is much more one of principle—it is, whether the government and the Legislature will venture to do *what is morally right*, in opposition to what has hitherto been omnipotent—*the interest of property*. "All experience has shown," as Mr. Mott well observes, in his report on the sanitary condition of Manchester and the manufacturing districts,† "that local authorities cannot be trusted to enforce such regulations as would be necessary to remove the evils under which the working classes are labouring. The neglect of commissioners of sewers and their surveyors, the old demoralising system of the poor-laws, the abuse of charitable trusts, corporation funds, or the management of local taxation, of what kind soever, have all failed of their intended benefits, and present one continued history of peculation and jobbing by those who generally interest themselves in those matters, or of supineness and inattention on the part of the more respectable and conscientious inhabitants."‡

This account is only too true, and it explains sufficiently the growth of those gigantic evils which threaten the very existence of society. The *Mammon*-spirit is still so strong in English society, that local bodies cannot be trusted to perform duties by which their pecuniary interests are affected. Hence the necessity, not

* Among these nuisances may be enumerated burying-places in populous neighbourhoods, and chimneys pouring forth volumes of smoke. It is certain that all factory chimneys, &c., may be made to consume their own smoke, and the town of Leeds has set the example of obtaining a local act to compel them to do so. This act ought at once to be made general. It is incalculable what good would be done simply by enabling the inhabitants of such places as Manchester to get an occasional glimpse of the sun and blue sky.

† Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 253.

‡ The following instances of the results of local management in Leeds will fully bear out these observations;—"Out of 586 streets only 68 are paved by the local authorities, and of these 29 are either not sewered at all or only partially so. Numbers of streets have been recently formed, and houses erected without pavement, and hence, without surface-draining, without sewers—or, if underdrainage can be called sewers, then with such as, becoming choked in a few months, are even worse than useless. Whole neighbourhoods have arisen in which there is neither water nor out-offices, nor any conveniences for the abso-

only of laws to protect the poorer classes, but still more of a vigorous central authority to enforce those laws.* To quote once more from the same Report†—"Regardless how unpopular the declaration may be, or to what extent popular clamour may condemn the interference with private rights and interests, I fearlessly assert that nothing less than a powerful, and, if you like, an arbitrary control over all matters relating to the sanitary condition of the working classes, their dwellings, &c., can ever remedy the deep-rooted evil under which society now suffers; and, unless some prompt and determined steps are taken, the pestilence will spread until it will set even legislative interference at defiance."

We entirely concur with these sentiments of Mr. Mott. If the legislature is in earnest in wishing to take effectual measures to combat the mass of misery and degradation which is increasing every day, and threatening to swallow up the landmarks of civilisation, another session will not be allowed to pass without creating a board of commissioners, *with powers as absolute for the protection of health and morality, as the poor-law commissioners possess for the protection of property.*‡

Among the other *preventive* measures required in large towns, may be mentioned a better system of criminal police, more especially as regards juvenile offenders. Under the present system, the prisons and houses of correction are too frequently little better than normal schools for the diffusion of crime. As regards adult and hardened offenders, while we do not wish to discourage the efforts of philanthropy to make the punishment, which is necessary as an example to deter others from the commission of crime,

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lute domestic wants of the inhabitants. The building of houses back to back occasions this in a great degree. It is, in fact, *part of the economy of buildings that are to pay a good per centage.* In one *cul-de-sac* in Leeds there are 34 houses, and in ordinary times there dwell in these houses, 340 persons, or 10 to a house. In the days of the cholera 75 cart-loads of manure were removed from this place, which had been untouched for years, and where there now exists a surface of human excrement of very considerable extent, to which these impure and unventilated dwellings are additionally exposed. This property is said to *pay the best annual interest of any cottage property in the borough."—B. Baker, Esq., Report on Leeds, Sanitary Reports*, vol. i.

* The want of such central authority to ensure the observance of its provisions was a cardinal defect of the bill introduced last session for the regulation of buildings.

† Sanitary Reports, vol. i., p. 255.

‡ The national benefit that would result from the vigorous enforcement of a few simple regulations is quite incalculable. In the town of Birmingham, owing to the circumstance of cellars not being used as dwellings, and the families of the working classes living generally in separate houses, the average mortality is much lower than in Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, or any other large manufacturing town, and the typhus fever, which in Glasgow furnishes 10,000 cases a year to the hospitals, is, comparatively speaking, unknown. The following table is a striking illustration of the benefits that would result from a system of sani-

a means of discipline and reformation for the offender, we must confess that we have little faith in the efficacy of any system to produce results that are appreciable in a national point of view. But, as regards the class of juvenile offenders, so numerous in all the centres of dense population, it is a question not of theory but of experience, that very extensive good may be effected by judicious measures, directed with a view to reformation.

The House of Refuge in Glasgow, is stated, by the local authorities, "to have produced the most marked effect upon the progress of juvenile depravity" in that town, and in a short time "to have diminished the number of juvenile male thieves (to whom its operations are confined), within the bounds of the Glasgow police, one-half." Many similar institutions exist, and they all agree in representing the class of juvenile offenders generally, as exhibiting a great deal of quickness and talent, together with a degree of diligence and industry, and susceptibility to moral impressions, quite sufficient to show that they are capable of being reformed by proper discipline.

They agree, also, in showing that very favourable results for the community at large may be attained by comparatively simple means; but they all arrive at the conclusion that some organised system of emigration is necessary for the permanent success of any experiment for reclaiming juvenile offenders, no hope being left for them, if they are turned adrift at the end of the period of confinement, in the scene of their former misdeeds. Whatever may be thought of transportation as a punishment for serious crimes and irreclaimable offenders, there can be no doubt that a modified system of transportation—or, more properly, of emigration—is the only way of saving the half-criminalised and destitute juvenile population of large towns from corruption and ruin, and of converting them into useful citizens.*

tary supervision, *which went no further than raising other towns to the standard of Birmingham.*

Year 1839.	Total number of deaths.	Deaths from fever.	Proportion of deaths from fever to total number of deaths.
London	52,698	4078	1 in 13
Liverpool	6,627	504	1 in 13
Manchester	6,706	533	1 in 12½
Leeds	4,259	245	1 in 17½
Birmingham	3,359	123	1 in 27

The total number of persons carried off in one year in England and Wales, by fever and contagious diseases, exceeds 56,000, most of whom are able-bodied adults. Every death may be reckoned as plunging two persons into destitution. The number of cases of such diseases must be at least 560,000 annually, and few cases of illness occur without causing distress, and depressing the condition of families towards pauperism.

* It would carry us too far from our subject to enter into the details of the va-

Much good might also be done, in large towns, by an increased strictness of police regulation directed towards the repression of whatever was obviously calculated to promote dissipation and immorality, and to throw temptation in the way of the poorer classes. For instance, the practice of paying wages in public-houses might be declared illegal, and public-houses might be compelled to close at an early hour on Saturday night, and during the greater part of Sunday. The latter measure, lately introduced at Liverpool, has had a most marked effect in diminishing the amount of intoxication, and the number of criminal charges in the police office on a Monday morning. It is also very questionable whether the immense number of gin-shops, brothels, and houses for the reception of stolen goods, which appear in all the police reports, to be kept quite openly in all the low quarters of London, Liverpool, and other large towns, ought to be tolerated, and whether their suppression ought not to be enforced with a strong hand.

Why should the government connive at what is openly and notoriously immoral? Is the certainty that an evil cannot be extirpated a sufficient reason for not attempting to diminish it? The truth is, that here, as in other cases, the great obstacle to improvement has been the undue influence of property. The brewers, distillers, gin-shop keepers, licensed victuallers and proprietors of low lodging-houses, and places of bad fame, are a powerful and influential class, with so much weight at elections, that few ministers or members of Parliament care to meddle with them, and this is the secret of the universal application of the *laisser-faire* system to domestic police. Free trade in vice is the watchword of a numerous body; and the only practical restriction on the traffic in immorality is, that it shall be carried on wholesale and not retail. The remedy for this is to find a legislature courageous enough to appeal to the sound sense and moral feeling of the country against the opposition of selfish interests.

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rious questions connected with prison discipline and criminal legislation. It is enough for our present purpose to point out what is the great practical desideratum, with a view not to individual cases, but to extensive and permanent national benefit—viz., the creation of a machinery for draining off some portion of the vast mass of vagrant, destitute, neglected, and incipient-criminal juvenile population in all large towns, into situations where they have a fair chance of becoming useful members of society. The system of apprenticeship, or assignment, in colonies where labour is in demand, appears, under proper regulations, best calculated for pomoting this object; nor does this system appear to be open to the objections which have been urged with much force against transportation conducted with a view to penal colonisation. The proposal is, not to transport criminals by way of punishment, but to assist juvenile delinquents who have passed through a penitentiary, and to whom no extraordinary degree of depravity can be reasonably imputed, in emigrating to a country where they have a fair chance of becoming useful citizens.

CHAPTER VIII.

EDUCATION.

Among the more intelligent thinkers, who see the insufficiency of the remedies proposed with so much confidence by political quacks and short-sighted enthusiasts, popular education is very generally advanced as the only effectual means of improving the condition of the labouring classes. With remarkable unanimity the poor-law, hand-loom weaver, and factory commissioners, the commissioners of inquiry into the state of mines and collieries, and most of the witnesses examined before recent parliamentary committees on subjects connected with the state of the population, point to education as the only adequate remedy against the progress of poverty and demoralisation. In one point of view they are undoubtedly right. Taking the word 'Education' in the wide sense in which it denotes moral improvement, elevation and enlargement of mind, development of the character and faculties in accordance with the true laws of human nature, there can be no doubt that it is the sole sufficient remedy. With an uneducated people, that is to say, a people destitute of foresight, resolution, intelligence, sound principle—a people ignorant alike of their rights and of their duties—a people callous to the claims of morality and to the impressions of religion, it is in vain to hope that happiness and prosperity can be secured by mere mechanical adjustment of material interests. The unanimity with which intelligent men of every shade of opinion advocate education, appears to us a testimony in favour of the truth which the fashionable philosophy of the last century had well nigh forgotten—that the outward life of a nation springs from its inward and spiritual life, and that the old devout faith which regarded national calamities and successes as judgments or rewards from the hand of the Almighty, was not without a meaning, and an inward kernel of perennial truth. In this comprehensive sense of the word, it is a mere truism to say that education is the best and only effectual means of raising the character and condition of a people. But the word 'Education' is also used in a very different sense, as denoting instruction in reading, writing, and a little elementary knowledge. Many people, when they talk of national education, mean little more than that people should be taught to read and write. Now, to suppose that the mere fact of communicating a few of the rudiments of intellectual instruction to a large per centage of the population will, of itself, prove an antidote against crime, destitution, irreligion, discontent, and all the evils

which threaten the existence of modern society, is alike contrary to common sense and to experience. It is contrary to common sense to expect that a love of reading for the sake of instruction, which is so extremely rare among the wealthy and cultivated classes, will be more common among those who live by labour; or that the class of works read by those who seek for excitement and amusement will be more conducive to improvement in the one case than in the other.* It is evident that reading is, at best, but the possession of a new faculty which may be used according to circumstances for good or for evil. The illusion which thought that a moral reformation of the working classes could be effected by means of Penny Magazines and Mechanics' Institutes, was natural, perhaps, under the circumstances of a newly-awakened enthusiasm for popular instruction, but not less visionary than that which dreamt of El Dorados and fountains of perpetual youth. Experience also has fully shown that a high average of instruction is by no means necessarily equivalent to a low average of crime and pauperism,† and that education may be little better than an instrument of demoralisation, and of exasperating political discontent and animosities of caste. These considerations have produced a strong reaction in the public mind against what may be called purely intellectual education, and a great majority of the most enlightened men of every country, who have turned their attention to the subject, have arrived at the conclusion that every really beneficial system of national education must be connected with and based upon religion.‡

Here again there is no difficulty about the general proposition. There is no doubt that all human knowledge and intellectual effort, which are not in some way or other, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, based upon religion, are barren and unfruitful, if not positively hurtful. There can be no doubt also, that where a true vital spirit of national religion does exist, and is represented by the National Church, the more intimately education is connected with that church the better. In Scotland, in the days of John Knox, it would have been absurd to think of a system of national education which should not have repeated the church catechisms, taught the church confessions of faith, and been to all intents and purposes thoroughly imbued with the spirit

* The result of some interesting inquiries, undertaken by the Statistical Society, shows conclusively that the staple article of demand in the circulating libraries of London, for the poorer classes, consists of novels of the most trashy description. Thousands read "Jack Sheppard," for one who studies for improvement.

† The researches of Guerry and other statistical writers have clearly established the fact, that a high average of crime and of education coexist in many of the districts and departments of France.

‡ This is the conclusion at which M. Cousin arrives, after a careful personal examination of the educational system of Prussia, and other German states.

of the Presbyterian church, and identified with the Presbyterian clergy. But the question is much more complicated when we have to deal with a country where a strong feeling of national religion no longer binds the nation into one whole, where nearly half the population dissent from the Established Church, and from one another; where the equality of all religious denominations in the eye of the law is distinctly recognised, and where the general feeling of the age is repugnant to every thing which bears a stamp of religious intolerance and exclusion. In such a country it is impossible to think of giving the Established Church a close monopoly of education; and yet, on the other had, how can this be avoided without excluding religion altogether from the national schools, or at any rate giving to state education a neutral and irreligious character? This is the practical difficulty which stands in the way of national education in England.

The only way of solving it is by a compromise between the extreme views on each side. On the one hand, the religious and church party must recollect, that if education, unconnected with religion, is dangerous; ignorance, *equally unconnected with religion*, is still more so. Admitting all that has been said of the inefficiency of useful knowledge as a means of regenerating character, and of the falseness of the theory which prescribes popular education as a universal remedy for crime and poverty, we think it scarcely possible to doubt, that in the position in which things now stand in England, it is better that people should be taught to read and write, than not. Any, even the lowest degree of elementary instruction, is better than leaving large masses of our population plunged in the grossest ignorance and heathenism, and inaccessible to every ray of truth.* If, under favourable circumstances, anarchical and irreligious ideas may be propagated more rapidly among a reading people, on the other hand, the press affords, in the present age, the principal means of access to superior minds and to ideas of regeneration. To take a practical instance: there can be no doubt that the extension of education in Ireland by the national schools has facilitated the rapid spread of the most important movement of self-regeneration ever wit-

* Can any thing be more melancholy than the view of the existing state of things furnished by the following table.—Out of the 1129 persons who passed through Preston gaol, the Rev. Mr. Clay, the chaplain, ascertained that 516 were quite ignorant of the simplest truths of religion, and only one familiar with the scriptures and conversant with the principles of religion. The result of a similar inquiry by the chaplain of Lewes goal is little more favourable. Out of 846 persons, 294 were wholly ignorant, 490 knew little more than the Saviour's name, 54 knew something of his history, and 8 only had any idea of Christian doctrine. Of these 846 prisoners, 305 could read fluently, and of these 49 knew something of Christ's history; of the remaining 541 who could not read, only 5 could be said to possess the slightest tincture of religious

nessed in modern times, that of temperance societies.* There can be no doubt that societies of this nature, and also friendly societies, benefit clubs, and other associations of a beneficial nature, are, *cæteris paribus*, more likely to spread among a reading than among an unreading people. A people also who can read, and have some slight notions of geography, are much more favourably situated with regard to emigration,† and can more easily seek their fortune in the colonies when employment fails at home. On the whole, an educated people have decidedly more resources, and situated as the great mass of our population is, it seems cruel to deprive them of any chance for the sake of a remote and contingent danger, which, in fact, amounts to this, that with a free press, and a population who can read, the missionaries of infidelity and disorder will beat their opponents out of the field. Another powerful consideration in favour of national education is, that it is certain, that without it such a large proportion of the population will learn to read and write as to attach a sense of conscious degradation and inferiority, of all feelings the most ruinous in its consequences, to those who want this knowledge. The condition of the uneducated portion of a generally educated people is of all others, the most unfavourable for morality and civilisation.‡

knowledge.—*Journal of Statistical Society.* vol. ii., p. 99, 442. Surely no system of education could give a worse result than *less than one per cent.* of the population Christian.

* The following testimony by a public officer to the beneficial change produced in Ireland by temperance societies, will fully bear out the statement in the text :—"The exertions of Father Mathew, and of the Roman Catholic clergy, have been most eminently, I might truly say miraculously successful, in putting a stop to the use of spirituous and of malt liquors by the working classes, who have all at once become as sober, quiet, well-behaved, and peaceable at their fairs, hiring-markets, public dances in the open air, funerals, and in their ordinary demeanour and habits, as they were formerly intemperate, riotous, quarrelsome, and disorderly. I have, in several preceding years, made nearly the same journey in Ireland as recently, exceeding 1300 miles in length, and have therefore had favourable opportunities to enable me to judge of the reality and extent of this great and beneficial change, and of the extraordinary rapidity with which it has been accomplished."—*J. Stuart, Esq., Reports of Factory Inspectors for* 1841, p. 13.

Nothing has occurred which argues so well for the prospects of society, and the regeneration of the working classes, as the temperance movement. The passion for intoxicating liquors is the immediate cause of more than half the crime, misery, and destitution, which prevail at the present moment.

† Mr. Tufnell, in his report on the emigration from Kent and Sussex states, that the want of some little knowledge of geography is one great cause of the indisposition of the poor to emigrate, when by so doing they could greatly better their condition.—*Appendix to Eighth Poor Law Report*, p. 143.

The evidence before the committee on the state of the Western Islands and Highlands, affords a strong illustration of the disadvantages under which an uneducated people labour when they are forced to compete with educated competitors.

‡ See an interesting paper by R. W. Rawson, Esq., in the third volume of

The advocates of high church principles should also recollect that any attempt to give the Church by act of Parliament a greater degree of influence over education and public opinion than it legitimately possesses, would, in all probability, injure the cause which they wish to advance. It is a *fact*, which should never be lost sight of, that during the last century the influence of the clergy over the public mind was reduced to a mere shadow, owing to a variety of causes, of which the most prominent undoubtedly were the lukewarmness, lassitude, and utter absence of zeal and efficiency on the part of the clergy themselves.* This has, in a great measure, ceased, but the lingering decline of a century is not to be restored in a day, and years of personal devotion and sacrifice on the part of individual members of the clergy must elapse before the church is again, in reality, a national church, and can calculate on the support of the nation in carrying out church principles. In the meantime nothing could be more fatal to her ultimate prospects than to come into premature collision with interests and ideas which are still decidedly too powerful for her, and especially to place herself in the position of opposing the spirit of the age, and interposing an obstacle to education by an unbending adherence to the claims and theories of a by-gone age.†

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the Journal of the Statistical Society, p. 331, where it is fully proved that the class who *remain ignorant among a partially educated population*, constitute by far the largest proportion of criminals. This agrees with the results of the French statistical writers, which show that although crime is frequently in a higher ratio to population in educated than in uneducated districts, the majority of the criminals belong to the uneducated class.

* It will be sufficient to quote one instance of what is unfortunately only too apparent. In the report of the commissioner who inquired into the condition of the mining and colliery population of the north of England, we find the following passage;—"The Methodists have chiefly, and in several instances *exclusively*, undertaken the charge of providing religious instruction for the colliers. Considerable moral amelioration has been caused through their agency, for which they merit, and have received from nearly all parties, their meed of praise. '*The church*,' says a churchman, '*ought to have done her duty better towards the poor colliers.*'"

† These reasons appear also conclusive against any attempt to enlist the state in support of church extension until the church has extended her influence, and shown that she has done all the good in her power with her present means. The fate which has overtaken the church of Scotland in her attempt to revive what were undoubtedly the genuine principles of Presbyterianism, should be a warning to all other establishments to be extremely cautious how they allow themselves to be tempted by the symptoms of reviving religious zeal, to strain church principles farther than they will bear. They may depend upon it "the sons of Zeruiah are still too hard for them," and that the only sound policy of the church is extreme prudence and moderation, with a zealous devotion to individual duty, and an anxious desire to make themselves practically useful. The example of the Wesleyan Methodists and of the Catholic priests (especially with regard to the temperance movement) may afford them many valuable

These considerations ought, as it appears to us, to reconcile the warmest supporter of the established church to a compromise which would enable the state to extend the benefits of a system of organised and efficient elementary instruction to all its subjects without distinction of religious opinion. On the other hand, the advocates of mental education ought to recollect, that it is utterly unreasonable for a minority to expect that their wishes and scruples are to stand in the way of great measures of national improvement. It is fully proved that education, separated from religion, loses half its advantages, if indeed it does not become absolutely prejudicial. It is clear also, that in the present state of public opinion in England, it is impracticable, if it were ever so advantageous, to banish religion from schools. The practical question lies between a system of religious education or no education at all. It is evident also, that while we have a national church, any system of national education based upon religion, must be, to a certain extent, connected with that church. There may be a great many very good arguments against having an established church at all; but there can be none for retaining one, and yet refusing to treat it with confidence, and reducing it to a position of uselessness and inaction. All, therefore, that the dissenter or free-thinker has a right to demand is, that education shall not be made a close monopoly in the hands of the established church, and an indirect means of reviving those disabilities and restrictions on account of religious opinions which have been abolished by the legislature. If he goes beyond this, and opposes every scheme of national education which gives the church a preference, he places himself in the same position as the bigoted churchman, who sacrifices a great practical good to an impracticable theory.

After a great deal of angry discussion, things seem to be gradually settling down into such a compromise as we have pointed at. The Irish system of national education, and the annual grant made through the committee of the Privy Council, which are now fully adopted by both the great parties of the state, and may be reckoned among the accomplished facts of any system of national education, proceed on this principle. The establishment of a system of government inspection, which is alike satisfactory to the church and to the dissenters, is a great step in advance towards the solution of the problem. The next great step would be the establishment of good normal schools. The truth is now beginning to be recognised, that the first essential towards a good system of

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hints how the church should proceed to regain influence. The missions also, which have been organised in Liverpool and other large towns for reclaiming *domestic heathenism*, point out a line of action which may be extended with the best effect.

education is to have good schoolmasters. Education is not a mechanical trade, which can be exercised by the first person picked up in the streets, who happens to know, "that the human mind has a faculty called memory, which may be acted upon by application of birch rods to the muscular integument of the hinder part of the body;" but, emphatically, a spiritual process, where character and faculties are developed under the guidance of a superior character and superior faculties. Hence the first care of every government really anxious to educate its people, ought to be to ensure the supply of a respectable and well-instructed body of schoolmasters. For this purpose two requisites are necessary; first, normal schools, where those intended for the profession may go through a course of careful preparatory training; secondly, a secure and adequate provision sufficient to give respectability to the calling of schoolmasters, and to induce men of abilities and good conduct to come forward as candidates. The establishment of normal schools upon such a footing as would secure the concurrence and support of the church, without excluding the members of other sects from their benefit, does not appear, in the present aspect of affairs, a very difficult enterprise, and it would be attended with great and incontestible advantages. To this extent there can be no doubt of the advantage of the state taking education into its own hands, provided the difficulties with the church and the dissenters can be got over. But it has been contended that the state ought to go no further, and should leave the establishment of local schools to private individuals and societies, confining itself to occasional grants by way of assistance. This is no doubt the least troublesome course for those in authority, and it is not surprising that it should find advocates among those who think that the great science of government is to do as little as possible, and to avoid responsibility. But it is open to all the objections against the voluntary system when applied to religious instruction, the support of the poor, or any other great national object. All experience shows that the result of trusting to voluntary subscriptions will be, that no provision whatever will be made for the wants of half the community. The result also will be, that schoolmasters, as a class, will be so miserably underpaid as to sink the profession in public estimation, and make it a refuge for those who are fit for nothing else.

Education will never be on a proper footing until there is a schoolmaster established by law in every parish or district containing a sufficient population to require a school.*

* Our idea is, that in every parish in England there should be a national school open to all religious denominations, but so far connected with the established church, that its leading forms of religious instruction should be used

When this is the case we may hope to see many of the advantages realised which are predicted by the advocates of popular education. We may hope to see a more moral and intelligent people, a people more careful of exercising foresight and self-denial, a people less addicted to gross and demoralising indulgences, a people more able to resist the elements of evil, and to struggle with and overcome the additional difficulties and temptations to which they are exposed by the growth of wealth and luxury, the vicissitudes of trade, and the many unfavourable circumstances attendant on the progress of an artificial civilisation. At the same time, however, we must bear in mind that the realisation of these hopes depends upon many other circumstances as well as the extension of education. There is much truth in the homely saying, that you must fill a man's belly before you teach him to read, and if the establishment of schools and schoolmasters is looked upon as an excuse for neglecting the physical wants of the people, and sacrificing their material interests, it will do more harm than good. We must recollect also, that, after all, no popular education is so efficacious as that which is instilled unconsciously by the example of the upper classes, and that creeds and catechisms are of little avail in teaching lessons which stand in glaring contradiction with the every-day practice of those who give the tone to public opinion.*

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING now passed in review the leading causes which appear to us to have contributed to swell the existing amount of distress, and also the more obvious and important measures which suggest

for such as chose to accept them, and the schoolmaster should be, as a general rule, a member of the establishment; and that in addition to this, *assistance* should be given, under proper conditions, to every voluntary association which chose to set up a school, to which a sufficient number of scholars could be found to resort, where a good secular education was given, and nothing taught inconsistent with the fundamental principles of Christian morality. This of course only applies to England. It would be a mockery of common sense to call the church of 800,000 out of 8,000,000 in Ireland, in any sense of the word, a national establishment. In Scotland, also, the establishment is, in many districts, a decided minority since the secession of the free church.

* Since this chapter was written, the experiment of a compromise on the subject of national education has been tried, and has unfortunately failed.

themselves as remedies, our task draws towards a conclusion. We are far from supposing that we have exhausted the subject, or done more than throw out a few partial views, and indicate, in a general manner, the outlines of the great social problem which presses for solution. On the contrary, we are fully persuaded that no complete solution is, at present, possible, and that society must, for years to come, be content to proceed in the tentative way of experiment, and not by any high *à priori* road of theory. With this view we have endeavoured to confine ourselves as much as possible to the consideration of *practical* measures—that is to say, of such measures as have a fair chance of being adopted, without a complete political and social revolution in the state of the country. We have purposely abstained from the discussion of all questions involving new theories of property, new relations between capital and labour, or fundamental alterations of any sort in the existing frame-work of English society, being convinced, in the first place, that nothing of the sort has a chance of being realised without a complete *bouléversement* consequent on an appeal to physical force; and in the next place, that whatever evils may be inherent in the present state of things, they are not so clearly preponderant over the good as to warrant a sober-minded man in taking a blindfold plunge into the gulf of revolution. We set aside, therefore, all political remedies, such as extension of the suffrage, vote by ballot, and the like, being convinced that they have no meaning unless as preliminary steps towards a thorough-going radical revolution,* and also all measures, such as repeal of the law of primogeniture, a more equal division of landed property, a co-operative system of labour in factories, a compulsory regulation of wages, and the like, not as

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Without entering upon the details of the government scheme of last session, I have the strongest possible feeling that the failure of a compromise, upon something like the general principles that were announced by Sir James Graham and Sir R. Peel, and so favourably received by Lord J. Russell and other leading men on the opposition side of the house, was a very great national misfortune. I do not pretend to measure the degree of blame that may have rested with the church or with dissenters, but I fully believe that the time will come when both will bitterly regret having rejected the opportunity of compromise, and committed themselves to the system of *exclusive* instead of national education. —1844.

* Political institutions are merely *means* towards certain *ends*. In the present case the *end* must either be, to continue the present system of government, which is, in fact, government by one or other of two great parties of a limited aristocracy, bidding against one another for the support of the middle classes and of public opinion, *or*, to subvert it and substitute a democracy. In the former case political reform has no object, the Reform Bill having already given to public opinion and the middle classes a sufficiently decided preponderance, and in fact enabled them to carry any thing they please, short of revolution, by throwing their weight alternately into the scale of Whig and Tory. In the latter case, extension of the suffrage has a clear meaning, but it is equivalent to revolution.

undeserving of attention in themselves, but as clearly inapplicable under existing circumstances. Under the same head we are reluctantly compelled to class many measures, humane and sound in principle, and which an over-ruling necessity alone compels us to reject, such as a limitation of the hours of labour in factories, and a much more extensive prohibition of the labour of infants and females. We are also compelled, by the conditions of the essay, to exclude from our consideration one of the most important branches of any inquiry connected with the situation and prospects of the labouring classes; viz.—the state of Ireland, and the effects of Irish immigration.*

Subject to these limitations, we now proceed to recapitulate briefly the results at which we have arrived in the preceding inquiry. The main fact which strikes us is the existence of a vast mass of extreme destitution and abject degradation, by the side of enormous wealth, rapid material progress, national greatness and security, and all the usual symptoms of a flourishing civilisation. On examining more minutely the details furnished by recent evidence and statistical returns, we find this destitution and degradation to be at the same time more intense and more extensive than could have been believed possible. In all our large cities and populous manufacturing districts a very large proportion of the population are living either without any certain means of subsistence, or upon wages utterly inadequate to maintain a decent existence, while among those whose earnings are sufficient to support them in respectability, thousands are reduced by intemperance, improvidence, and the vices resulting from ignorance and the absence of moral and religious principle, to the standard of the starving beggar and prostitute. This squalid mass of misery, fostered by neglect, multiplying by its own inherent tendency, and swollen by the continual influx of

* The immigration of the Irish has probably been one of the most active causes in depressing the condition and habits of the labouring population in this country, especially in large towns. The amount of Irish population in all the large towns is immense; in Liverpool there are "not less than 50,000 of the lower Irish resident;" in Glasgow, 49,531; in Manchester, 30,000; and in many other large towns nearly in the same proportion. Humboldt has estimated the emigration from Ireland, in the twenty years ending 1821, at one million. The Reports are full of evidence of the demoralising effects produced by the example of the Irish on the labouring population. Dr. Duncan, who, from his situation at Liverpool, has had the best opportunities of judging, observes—"By their example and intercourse they are rapidly lowering the standard of comfort among their English neighbours, communicating their own vicious and apathetic habits, and extinguishing all sense of moral dignity, independence, and self-respect." He concludes that it is hopeless to expect any permanent improvement in Liverpool, "as long as the native inhabitants are exposed to the inroads of numerous hordes of uneducated Irish, spreading physical and moral contamination around them." It is clear the cause of improvement in England cannot be separated from the fate of Ireland.

Irish immigrants, rural labourers in search of employment, and manufacturing operatives reduced to poverty by strikes, improvements in machinery, and vicissitudes in trade, advances continually; and, although ravaged by the typhus fever, and decimated by a frightful mortality, encroaches more and more on the boundaries of civilisation, threatening to sweep away the whole fabric of society in a new deluge of barbarism. Nor is the evil confined to towns; on the contrary, we find an appalling amount of pauperism in many of the rural districts, and have distinct evidence that the bulk of the agricultural population are barely able to support families, and utterly unable to provide against sickness, old age, and fluctuations in employment. Among the other classes of the labouring population we find less physical want, but too frequently gross and heathen ignorance, intemperance, improvidence, and a dangerous feeling of exasperation against the higher classes. On the whole, we have seen reason to believe that not less than a fifth or sixth part of the total population exist in a state of destitution and want, depending in a great measure, either on public and private charity, or on criminal resources, for a part of their support; while another numerous class are just able to maintain themselves on the brink of this gulf of pauperism, while enjoying health and strength, and in full employment, with the certainty of falling back into it with the first accident which renders their daily labour no longer a marketable commodity.

On examining the causes which have led to this state of things, we have been struck by the insufficiency of the economical causes usually assigned, such as increase of population, extension of manufacturing industry, and the like, to account *in themselves* for evils so extensive as those which now exist. On the contrary, it has appeared to us that every one of these causes might have co-existed, and has actually co-existed elsewhere, with a sound and healthy condition of society, and an advance in the elements of true civilisation. We have been led, therefore, to the conclusion that the evils complained of are the natural result and retribution of what may be called a decay in the vital warmth of religious feeling and sense of duty, which showed itself generally throughout European society during the eighteenth century, and in this country took the form of a hard utilitarian selfishness, and inordinate devotion to money. This spirit appears to have showed itself among all classes, reducing the relations between landlord and tenant, cultivator and labourer, capitalist and operative, more and more into those of *hostility resulting from the competition of adverse self-interests.* Under these circumstances, the revolution effected by machinery, the vast and sudden increase of wealth and population, the French war with its exorbitant expenditure and rise in prices, the enormous immigration from Ireland, and a variety of other causes, have conspired to increase the evil and to

bring it to a crisis. The labouring population, ground down in the unequal conflict between capital and labour, and demoralised alike by the neglect and by the example of the upper classes, have taken the only effectual method of revenging themselves, that of multiplying their numbers and threatening society with an increasing mass of misery and want. Distress, spreading more and more widely, is invading fresh classes; and with each recurring paroxysm of trade and period of commercial depression, is threatening to ingulf those who have hitherto escaped its ravages. Society, awakening from the dreams of a new golden age to be realised by mechanical inventions, march of intellect, accumulation of capital, and sound political economy, finds itself compelled by a terrible necessity to abandon the system of *laisser-faire*, and to embark in the struggle for life or death with the elements of disorganisation and ruin.

When we turn from a contemplation of the disease to a consideration of the remedies, it appears evident, that as no specific cause can be assigned, so no specific remedy can be pointed out. The only effectual reform is that in which each person begins by reforming himself; in other words, where a revival of those feelings of duty and moral obligation, whose decay has been the primary source of the evil, leads to innumerable individual efforts and to an improved state of public opinion. Without this, it must be frankly admitted that legislation can do little. In the first place, legislative measures of improvement are, in the present political constitution of the country, impracticable, unless supported by the public opinion of the upper classes. In the next place, even if practicable, they would be inoperative against a continuance of the causes which tend to swell the existing evils, and to make distress, if driven back for a moment, continually recur on a wider scale.

At the same time, however, it must be admitted, that if, as we see reason to hope, a better spirit is now alive, and society is fast awakening to a sense of its dangers and its duties, several of the legislative remedies which have been suggested would be of great use, both in relieving immediate distress and securing a valuable respite, and also by setting an example of determination on the part of those in authority to do what is right, and facilitating and encouraging the efforts of society towards self-regeneration. Foremost among these measures we place those which have a tendency to reduce the price of the necessaries of life, to open up markets for our products, and to place industry on a more secure and stable footing. This, as it appears to us, can only be effected by adopting the principle of real reciprocity in our intercourse with foreign countries, especially with the United States of America, and for this purpose repealing or greatly reducing the duties on corn and all articles of food and raw material.

Such a measure, we have seen reason to believe, would be clearly beneficial for all classes, except the agricultural interest, meaning thereby the landlords and tenants, and, with a few exceptions, for them also, provided the improvements quite within their reach were adopted, and the Scotch system of commuting money into corn-rents generally introduced.

As regards the purely manufacturing population, this appears the only very important measure of practical relief that could be adopted with a fair chance of success, and without incurring dangers too great to be rashly encountered. The rest must be trusted to the progress of enlightened and benevolent views among the master manufacturers themselves, leading them to consult the welfare of the people under their charge, and to moderate the spirit of speculation and over-competition which has led to such ruinous consequences—a result which we may hope will be materially aided by the process of concentration into the hands of a few large capitalists, now going forward rapidly in every department of manufacturing industry. So also as regards the agricultural population, no special measure of relief appears applicable which can at all exonerate the owners of land from the responsibility of raising the condition of their dependents by the only effectual means—viz., by residing on their estates and using their influence to secure fair wages to the labourer, to introduce better systems of hiring and payment than by the day or week, to provide for the peasantry on their estates, gardens and allotments, to improve their cottages, and generally to promote habits of respectability and ideas of improvement.

As regards the labouring population generally, we have been led to think that a considerable revision of our financial system, substituting the principle of direct taxation for that of taxes on articles which are either implements of industry or necessaries of life, and abolishing taxes which have a direct prejudicial effect on public morality, and the civilisation of the lower classes, would be extremely desirable. Still more urgent, however, appears the necessity of restraining the intolerable abuse of the right of private property, which has lodged a large proportion of the poorer classes in dwellings, where health, comfort, and respectability, are sacrificed to gain; and of enacting and enforcing regulations which shall secure society in future against the enormous evils which have resulted from leaving its most important interests at the mercy of blind accident and sordid speculation. Emigration has been considered as a remedy for the evils of a redundant population; but if we have been led to doubt its applicability as a means of immediate and practical relief on a large scale for the most distressed classes of the population, although fully impressed with its ultimate importance, and anxious to see the government take such steps as, without hazarding too great an inno-

vation on the system of private emigration at present going forward, might pave the way for something more extensive and better organised, with a view to the relief of domestic distress, and the permanent welfare of the poorer classes of emigrants.

The question of poor-laws has been considered both with reference to the theory of public charity and to the present practice of the country, and the alterations effected by the Amendment Act. Without dissimulating the evils of the old system, and the inadequacy of any system of public charity to give effectual relief to such a mass of distress as at present exists, we have been led to the conclusion that the worst of all systems is that which totally denies the right of destitution to relief, and that an extension of the principle of the English poor-law to Scotland, together with some mitigation of the principles of administration laid down by the poor-law commissioners in their reports as regards England, would be very desirable.

Finally, education has been considered, not so much with reference to its abstract advantages, respecting which all parties are agreed, as to the practical difficulties which stand in the way of its extension, and the motives which should urge all reasonable men to agree to such a compromise on the religious part of the question, as would enable the government to carry into effect such a comprehensive system of elementary instruction as would really deserve the name of national education.

On the whole, the impression left on our mind by the investigations and reflections respecting the actual state of society, of which this essay states the result, is, that with much to rouse us to exertion, there is nothing to make us despair. Amidst a great deal that is unsound and dangerous, we have never failed to recognise a great many elements of good. The energy and worth of the national character are still unimpaired. Wherever individuals have exerted themselves, zealously and disinterestedly, for the improvement of those around them, benefit has never failed to ensue. *A little good has invariably gone a long way*, and in every grade of society, every department of industry, there are numerous examples which radiate improvement around them, and demonstrate that the most inveterate evils are not incurable. On all hands we see a stir and movement in the public mind; and if nothing more, at any rate a recognition of the necessity of doing something, which, after the protracted lethargy of the last century, is a great step in advance. Concurrently with this we see a rapid decline in the old feelings of party spirit, and in the exclusive ascendency of selfish interests, which have hitherto crippled the action of the government, and ruled the decisions of the legislature. Improvement is no longer impossible without a revolution, and *radical* measures, if not of political reform, then, what is much better, of practical relief, may be proposed and carried by a *Con-*

servative government. Every well-considered measure, brought forward in a right spirit, not only does good in itself, but makes it easier to do more good. Difficulties which appear insuperable, doubts which cannot now be solved, vanish of themselves when we grapple boldly with the duty which lies nearest at hand. The evils of society, as of the individual, are of our own creation, and are already half conquered when we look them in the face. No society ever yet perished which had the will to save itself. It is only where the will is so enervated, that a community had rather shut its eyes to the dangers which menace it, than make the necessary sacrifices to avert them, that its situation is desperate.

That such is the condition of our old English fabric of society, with its splendid aristocracy, its venerable church, and other time-honoured institutions, we are loath to think. Time will show, and the Providence which rules the destinies of nations will bring about its appointed ends by its appointed means. This is certain; but it is no less so that each one of us has duties to perform, the responsibility of which cannot be shifted on the shoulders of Fate. Let every one who, in his public or private capacity, can do any thing to relieve misery, to combat evil, to assert right, to redress wrong, do it with his whole heart and soul, and trust to God for the result.

> " Know'st thou *yesterday*, its aim and reason,
> Work'st thou well *to-day* for worthy things,
> Then calmly wait the *morrow's* hidden season,
> And fear not thou, what fate soe'er it brings."
>
> *Goethe, translated by Carlyle.*