

A SHORT  
ECONOMIC HISTORY  
OF ENGLAND

BY

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B.A. LONDON

LATE HEAD MISTRESS OF THE COUNTY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS, ~~BRIMLEY~~

II. FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE EIGHTEENTH  
CENTURY TO 1874

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
HUMPHREY MILFORD

1925

Oxford University Press

*London Edinburgh Glasgow Copenhagen*

*New York Toronto Melbourne Cape Town*

*Bombay Calcutta Madras Shanghai*

Humphrey Milford Publisher to the UNIVERSITY

Printed in England

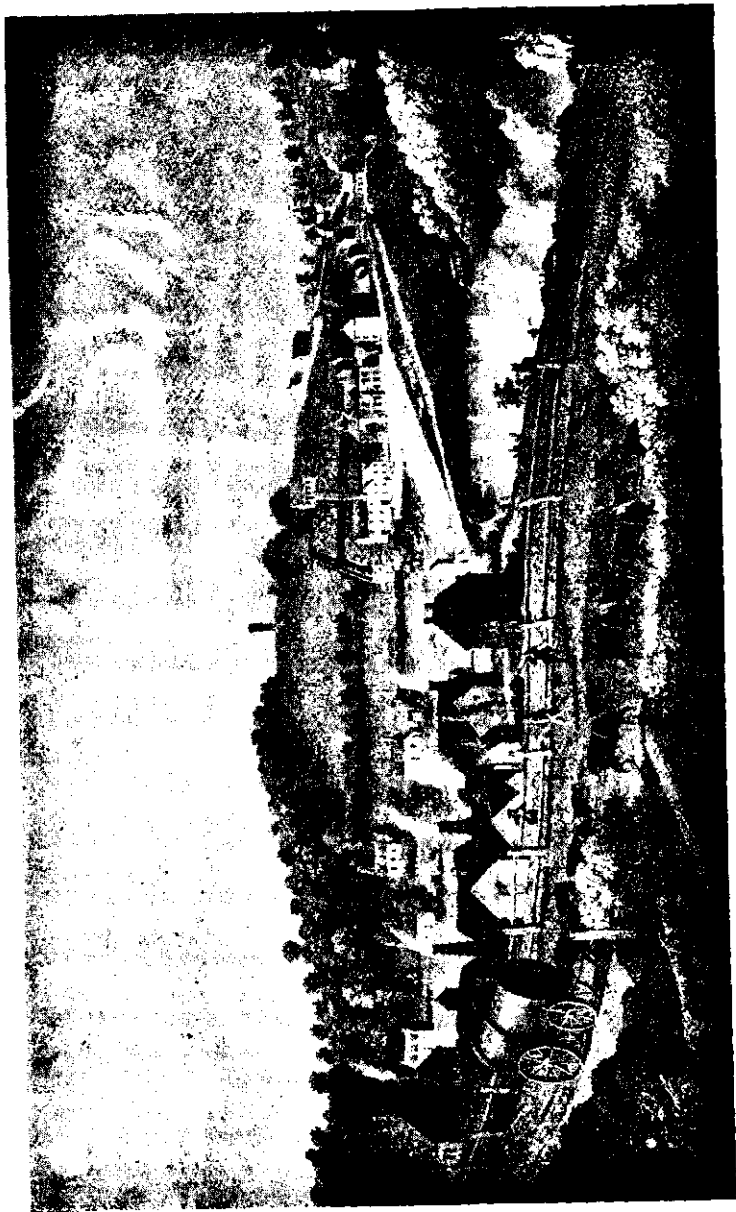
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*THE AUTHOR* desires to acknowledge the courtesy of Messrs. Longmans, Green and Co. in allowing her to quote extracts from 'English Farming Past and Present', by R. E. Prothero (Lord Ernle); 'History of Trade Unionism', by S. and B. Webb; and 'The Village Labourer', by J. L. and Barbara Hammond.

*The design on the cover is from a mediæval jetton or 'casting-counter', and represents the casting-board or scaccarium used by the mediæval merchant in his calculations.*



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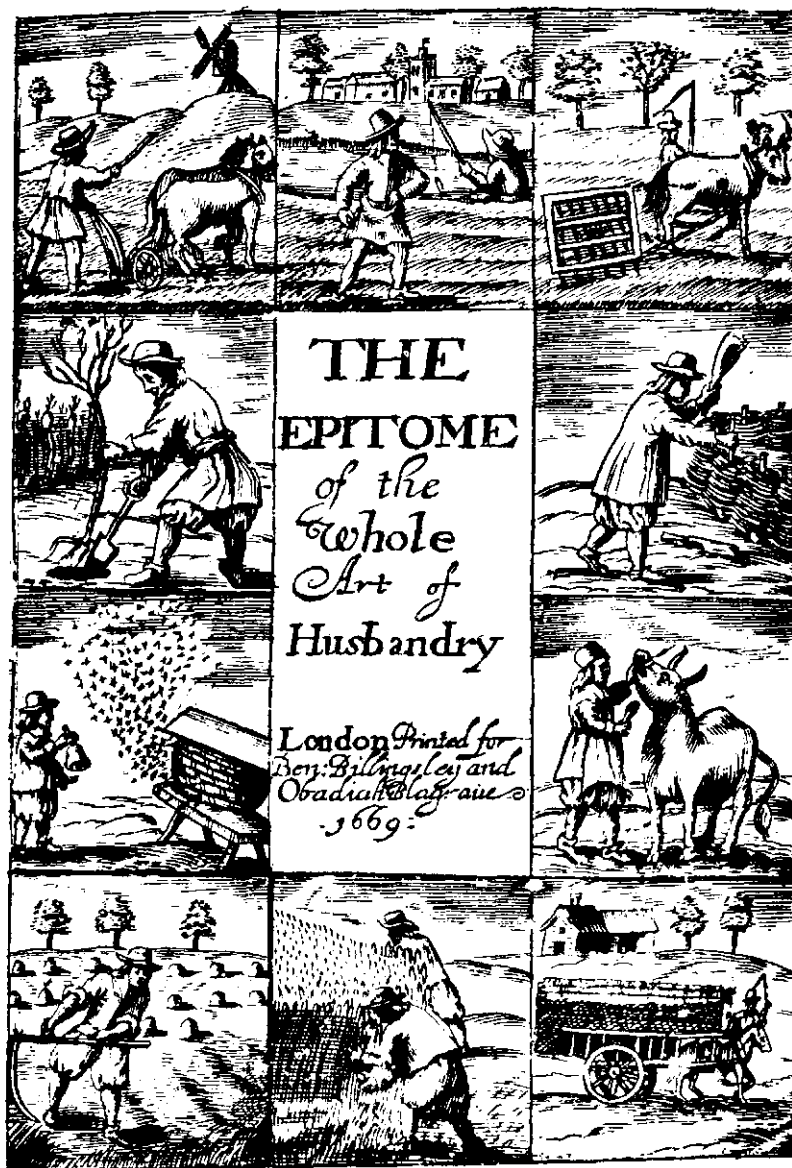
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B O O K I I

From the Middle of the  
Eighteenth Century to 1874



THE  
EPIITOME  
of the  
Whole  
Art of  
Husbandry

London Printed for  
Ben. Billingsley and  
Obadiah Blagrave  
1669.



## PART VI. 1750-1834

### I. The Agrarian Revolution

IN 1750, in spite of the many enclosures of all kinds that had been made since the fifteenth century, the characteristic village of middle and southern England was still an open-field one, not differing fundamentally from those of the Middle Ages. By 1833 the type survived in ever dwindling numbers, and the modern system of consolidated farms mostly held by tenant farmers was firmly established throughout the country. In the course of these eighty-three years not only the face of England but its whole social structure was revolutionized.

**Enclosures.** The cause of the revolution was the sudden speeding up of the enclosure movement. As we have seen, enclosures had never absolutely ceased since the wool demand of the fifteenth century had started them, but their extent, frequency, and objective had altered with altering determining forces. Those of the period we are about to consider were the direct result of the movement for high farming, the initial stages of which were dealt with in Part V. The rapid rate of the enclosures of our period can be estimated from such figures as these, that during the reign of George III there were passed 3,554 Acts of Enclosure dealing with 5½ million acres. The area dealt with lay chiefly in the Midlands, in Norfolk, and in Wales; in the Home Counties there were few enclosures, in Devon and Cornwall none.

There were three kinds of land that could be enclosed, the common-fields, the commons, and the wastes. How did a lord of the manor who wished to enclose his land proceed in the eighteenth century? Where he held a large portion of the

village and was able by careful adjustments of his leases to secure a large fraction of the common-fields at his disposal at the same moment, he might, and sometimes did, secure enclosure by mutual agreement with the other holders. In normal cases, however, this was not so easy, especially if he wished to break up the commons as well as the common-fields. He, therefore, in conjunction with perhaps the next largest holder in the village and with the holder of the tithes, promoted a Bill in Parliament. Until 1774 he was under no obligation to tell the other landholders what he was doing, though after that date notices had to be posted on the church on three Sundays in August or September. Parliament then granted leave to bring in the Bill, and after the second reading a committee, selected by the promoter of the Bill, was nominated to deal with it. At this point petitions might be received against the Bill, but unless the opposition included some large landowner, little notice was taken of them. The consent of three-quarters or four-fifths of those interested was necessary, but the basis of the fraction was property value, not number of people, and as the property already enclosed was included in the total, evidently the lord of the manor could usually dominate the situation.

The Bill having passed, commissioners proceeded to the village to divide up the land. The Act had probably provided that a certain amount of the land should go to the lord of the manor, to the holder of the tithes, and sometimes a small allotment to the poor; the rest was divided among the yeomen and the copyholders in proportion to their holdings. Obviously, much depended on the character of the commissioners, and their nomination was usually in the hands of the promoter of the Act. Up to 1801, one of them might even be the lord's bailiff. Claims had to be sent in writing and precisely stated—the bulk of the peasantry not being able to read or write. After the land had been allocated the owners were obliged to fence or hedge their new holding, and to pay their proportionate cost of the expenses of the whole affair. Obviously, such a system was open to all kinds of abuses, some of which Parliament tried to



OPEN FIELDS and strip cultivation still surviving at Epworth in Lincolnshire

remedy by Standing Orders, such as the church notice already mentioned, and others exercising some control over the extortions of commissioners. Attempts to bring in a General Enclosure Act regulating the business failed, even though backed by the newly-created Board of Agriculture, and all efforts to secure some consideration for the poorer tenants and cottagers were ruthlessly resisted. Not till 1836, when it was practically too late, was anything done. The vested interests of lawyers, commissioners, and parliamentary officials were too powerful. For Enclosure Acts proved a gold mine to these classes, and the costs became preposterous, sometimes amounting to more than the capital value of the land concerned.

What were the reasons advanced for the change? The principal one was the inefficiency of open-field farming and the increased production that could be got from enclosed land by the new and more scientific methods. There is no question that open-field tillage was very poor. The charges brought against it in the sixteenth century<sup>1</sup> were still true, while the relative efficiency of the best farming on enclosed lands was much higher. The descriptions of Arthur Young, though we must discount them somewhat as coming from a passionate propagandist of the new agriculture, are convincing as to the desperate condition of many of the open fields, and are endorsed by other writers with less bias. Ellis, in 1773, said that the farmers of the Vale of Aylesbury reaped bushels where they should reap quarters, and in Buckinghamshire and Northampton manure was used for fuel and for buildings instead of on the land. Marshall describes lands near Gloucester where he 'found beans hidden among mustard growing wild as a weed; peas choked by poppies and corn-marigolds; every stem of barley fettered with convolvulus; wheat pining in thickets of couch and thistle. It is not surprising that the yield of wheat was anything from eighteen bushels an acre down to twelve or eight bushels.'<sup>2</sup> All open-field farming was not as bad as this, and an enlightened village might adopt many of the new methods, and some did.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 180.

<sup>2</sup> Prothero, *English Farming*, p. 199.

But winter crops could not be grown on lands over which pasture rights existed from August to February, and the difficulties of draining and weeding were almost insuperable in the commingled strips.

On the other hand, enclosures would facilitate modern methods, and even the engrossing of farms and the squeezing out of the small occupier would, in Arthur Young's opinion, be justified by the enormously increased production.

'Where', he asks, 'is the little farmer to be found who will cover his whole farm with marl at the rate of 100 to 150 tons per acre? Who will drain all his land at the expense of £2 or £3 an acre? Who will pay a heavy price for the manure of towns and convey it 30 miles by land carriage? Who will float his meadows at the expense of £5 an acre?' Obviously the argument is unanswerable; the new farming was capitalist farming, the day of the self-sufficing village was past. Young claimed that more produce meant higher rents for landlords, more profits for farmers, higher wages, and more food. Let us see how far his prophecies were fulfilled.

The effects of enclosures may conveniently be regarded from three points of view, according as they concerned production, rents, or people. The first result was to increase the total area cultivated. Much of the commons was good land, well worth turning into arable, while the best land of the common-fields was often used as pasturage for the production of better cattle. A considerable part of the wastes that were enclosed was used to raise crops, which the high prices that ruled during the Napoleonic wars made worth raising. While the gross product of any given village after enclosure was often less than it had been before, especially where arable was turned to grass,<sup>1</sup> there is no question that as a whole the produce of the country was greatly increased. It was not so much that enclosures necessarily produced more as that enclosures were a necessary preliminary to any practice of the new farming, which aimed at

<sup>1</sup> A case is given by Dr. Slater of a parish of 2,000 acres which produced £4,000 before enclosure and £2,600 after.

and secured much greater results per acre. The advocates of enclosures maintained that tenant farming, which certainly increased as enclosures became general, also tended towards high farming. For the landlord could and did force his tenants to adopt the new methods by forcing up rents to a level which could only be paid by abandoning the old routine. Young

#### COURSING.

ON account of the improvements of agriculture, the increasing price, of all the articles of life, with the increasing taxes, few princely fortunes can compass the maintenance of a pack of hounds, and the pleasures of the chase must be proportionably diminished. As enclosures proceed, the great fox covers of the country will disappear; and many staunch fox-hunters lament, that they may be "*in at the death*" of that sport. In consequence of these revolutions in the sporting world, greyhound-coursing seems to be adapted in several parts of the kingdom, & to be carried on with a spirit of enthusiasm by many gentlemen of consequence. The following account of celebrated greyhounds, matches, &c. depending, is extracted from "*The YORK HERALD*"—a paper, though not destitute of any information that can satisfy the political, polite, or commercial world, pays particular attention to the authenticity of its sporting intelligence, so essentially requisite in that part of the kingdom, and which may not prove altogether uninteresting to some of our readers.

*Newspaper cutting of August 1801. Enclosure was proceeding at such a pace that even sportsmen were disturbed.*

even went so far as to claim that the absentee landowner, gambling on his ancestral acres at Brooks's, was a benefactor to agriculture, since he had to raise rents to pay his debts of honour.

There is no question that enclosures did raise rents. In the first place the costs of enclosure were so great that only by higher rents could the outlay be recouped. Often they were doubled and even quadrupled. Where rich arable land was



turned to pasture the rise in rent would be considerable. The parish of 2,000 acres mentioned above, though its produce dropped 35 per cent., rose in rental value  $63\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., from £1,100 to £1,800. The saving in labour gave increased profits: Rents depended not on gross produce but on net profit, i.e. the amount that went to feed the industrial population of the towns. Enclosures tended to reduce the numbers of the rural workers and increase those of the towns. The same amount of food produced by fewer hands would cost less to produce, the profits would increase, and hence the landlords could exact more rent. The bringing into tillage of poorer lands raised the relative value of good land and so rents rose from this cause also.

Production and rents then were increased, it remains to inquire what were the effects on the inhabitants of the land. We may perhaps briefly summarize them thus: the squires, the parsons, the lawyers, and the large tenant farmers benefited considerably, the small yeoman, copyholders, and tenants were pushed to the verge of ruin and gradually disappeared, the cottagers and labourers were either driven from the rural districts altogether or remained as sweated wage-earners, a landless proletariat. Let us see how this came about. We must take up the story at the point where the commissioners have done their division, and nothing is left for the village but to reorganize itself on the new basis. The lord, we may be sure, has got full equivalent for all his land and a large part of the commons; the tithe-owner, parson or lay impropiator, has been secured carefully by the Act; the freeholders have established their claims comparatively easily; the copyholders have had more difficulty, especially in securing any claims they may put forward for compensation for the loss of common rights; but the cottager, with no acres in the common-field and very dubious rights of common, has obtained nothing. Even if he can establish his common rights, they are not his, but belong to the owner of the cottage of which he is only the tenant, and the owner, not the cottager, secures the compensation. The next step is that all these classes are now faced with the problem of how to fence

or hedge their new holdings, for the Act compels them to do this within a certain time, as well as to pay their share of the cost of enclosure. The larger freeholders and copyholders can probably meet these two expenses by selling part of their stock, and may after a few years recover the outlay by improved methods of farming on the new holdings. Frequently they borrow money, for the new farming demands large capital, and the bankers flourish. But the smaller men cannot possibly face the expense, and sell their land rather than meet it; they rapidly sink to the level of day-labourers. The small farmer disappears from the land.

The cottager was in even a worse plight; his commons were taken away and his cow must follow. Though he was a day-labourer, he had not up till now been entirely dependent on his wage; a cow or two, chickens, pigs, and geese helped out his scanty earnings, giving him milk for his children, and butter, cheese, and eggs to sell, and bacon to help him through the winter. He lost, too, his fuel which he had always drawn from the common. The scientific reformers of agriculture might pour scorn on his miserable cow and his paltry chickens, but to the labourer they made life worth living, they even held the possibility of thrift and hope of advancement; enclosures gave us fat beasts but they also gave us hopeless men. The Reporter of 1807 was of opinion that 'If it could even be proved that some cottagers were deprived of a few trifling advantages, yet the small losses of individuals ought not to stand in the way of certain improvements on a large scale'. Arthur Young, keen advocate of enclosures as he was, saw more truly the effects of the methods by which they were carried out, when in 1801 he wrote: 'By nineteen enclosure acts out of twenty the poor are injured, in some grossly injured. . . . The poor in these parishes may say with truth, "Parliament may be tender of property; all I know is I had a cow and an Act of Parliament has taken it from me."' Henceforth the agricultural labourer has nothing to depend on but his daily wage. Even so, if he could be secure of employment he might at least live; but the new farming

often meant less labour, invariably so where pasture replaced arable. Counties like Leicester, now the 'grass country', were before the enclosures almost entirely open arable fields. Whole villages were depopulated, and even where this did not happen the supply of labour exceeded the demand and enabled the farmers to beat down wages. At the same time the hopelessness of outlook for the worker, who could no longer look forward to securing by thrift a small farm, made early marriages common and the birth-rate rose rapidly. And the demands of the factories for labour were now drawing away the hopeless proletariat to the mushroom towns, and the depopulation of the countryside went swiftly on.

The misery that followed enclosures is often attributed by contemporary writers to the laziness and drunkenness of the workers; they treat

'as its causes, changes that were really its consequences. They note the increase of drunkenness but forget that the occupation of the labourer's idle moments was gone; they attack the mischievous practice of giving children tea, but forget that milk was no longer procurable; they condemn the rising generation as incapable for farm labour, but forget that the parents no longer occupy land on which their children could learn to work; they deplore the helplessness of modern wives of cottagers who had become dependent on the village baker, but forget they were now obliged to buy flour and had lost their free fuel; they denounce their improvident marriages, but forget that the motive of thrift was removed.'<sup>1</sup>

As Arthur Young vividly argues: 'Go to an ale-house kitchen of an old enclosed country, and there you will see the origin of poverty and the poor-rates. For whom are they to be sober? For whom are they to save? For the parish? If I am diligent, shall I have leave to build a cottage? If I am sober, shall I have land for a cow? If I am frugal, shall I have half an acre of potatoes? You offer no motives, you have nothing but a parish officer and a workhouse. Bring me another pot.' In

<sup>1</sup> Prothero, *English Farming*, p. 307.

spite, however, of all protest the degradation went on, and, as Goldsmith foresaw :

A bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

**Improved Methods of Farming.** What then was the new agriculture in whose interest the social structure of England was overturned? First came methods of improving the land. Marling was revived, new crops were introduced, swedes, mangold-wurzel, kohl-rabi, &c., and with these came the possibility of increased live stock, and hence more manure. New implements followed, better ploughs, drills, reaping, mowing, and winnowing machines, horse rakes, scarifiers, chaff-cutters, and turnip-slicers. In 1784 the invention of the threshing machine displaced much labour. But the greatest revolution was in stock-breeding. The pioneer of this branch was Robert Bakewell (1725-95). Up to 1750 the value of sheep had lain in their wool and their manure, of cattle in their milk and their powers of draught. Little or no attempt was made to establish pure breeds or to breed for special points. Long legs and size of bone were assets in a country of bottomless mud-tracks, of ploughing by oxen, and a population that lived mainly on bread. Bakewell set out to produce animals that weighed heaviest in the prime joints, were small-boned, and fattened early. The moment was opportune, for the growing population of the towns demanded meat. His plan was to breed in and in from the finest specimens only. He was most successful with sheep. Out of the two existing classes of Warwickshire and Leicester sheep, of the latter of which Marshall, in 1784, wrote that 'a naturalist would have found some difficulty in classifying him—a something between a sheep and a goat', Bakewell created his new Leicesters, small of bone and fattening early, hardy alive and heavy when dead. Other farmers followed his lead, and breeds pre-eminent for different points were soon created. Bakewell tried also with cattle, and, though his personal success was not so great, he gave the impetus and others established

### SALE OF CATTLE.

The sale of the capital stock of bulls and cows, the property of the late Mr. Robert Fowler, commenced on Tuesday last, at Little Rollright, in the county of Oxford; and it was supposed that five thousand persons attended, and many of them from distant counties. We have been favoured with the following particulars:

A bull, called Garrick, five years old, sold for 205gs.

A ditto, called Sultan, two years old, for 210gs.

A ditto, Washington, two years old, for 205gs.

A ditto, ———, one year old, for 150gs.

A ditto, ———, one year old, for 180gs.

Two ditto, ———, one year old each, for 200gs.

A cow, Brindled Beauty, in calf, for 260gs.

A ditto, Washington's mother, in calf, 185gs.

A ditto, Garrick's sister, in calf, 115gs.

A ditto, Long-horned Nancy, in calf, 105gs.

A ditto, Young Nell, 120gs.

A ditto, Spotted Nancy, 80gs.

A ditto, red, 73gs.

A heifer, black, three years old, 135gs.

A ditto, Young Brindled Beauty, two years old, 63gs.

A ditto, Nell's White Back, two years old, 85gs.

A calf, three or four months old, 30gs.

The amount of the first day's sale was 3,427l. 4s.



THE RISE OF THE STOCK-BREEDER. A newspaper cutting of April 1791  
'and a picture of the long-horn bull 'Garrick'

different breeds; the formation of herds of Durham Shorthorns, Herefords, or North Devons became a favourite pursuit of wealthy landlords. What the improvement was can be judged from these figures: in 1710 beeves averaged 370 lb. and sheep 28 lb.; in 1795 the former reached an average of 800 lb. and the latter 80 lb. Such beasts as these could not be raised on open fields.

Bakewell was a practical farmer and business man, who worked on theories of his own, which he tried to keep secret. But there were also many writers and theorists on the subject. The best known is Arthur Young (1741-1820), who, though he failed as a practical farmer, was widely influential with his pen. His tours in search of information as to the agricultural state of England, Ireland, and France, his agricultural monthly magazine, and finally his position as secretary to Pitt's new Board of Agriculture (1793), gave him enormous influence. He was a passionate upholder of enclosures, though not of the reckless way in which they were carried out. He made strenuous efforts after 1795 to secure some care for the cottager and some limit to the greed of the rich, but in vain.

The interest in agriculture was also evident from the number of cattle-shows, wool-fairs, &c., that were held all over the country. At the same time agricultural societies of all kinds were formed, both central and provincial.

Science, too, turned its attention to agriculture, and agricultural chemistry started with Humphry Davy's lectures in 1803.

It is obvious that the new farming required much capital, and the high prices due to the wars after 1795 made land an attractive investment. Typical of the new farmer-capitalist was Thomas William Coke (1752-1842). In 1778 he took in hand some land on his Norfolk estates, which produced a little rye and a few sheep and half-starved cows. Coke marled and clayed, bought manure, drilled his wheat and turnips, grew grasses, and trebled his live stock. The use of bones as manure, of oil-cake for feed, and of stall-feeding gave him still further production. He

improved his grass lands by sowing good seed, and worked early and late, helping also his tenants to improve their land. He spared no reasonable expense on farm buildings and cottages, and laid out altogether on this half a million of money. Long leases with agreements as to good farming made his tenants as anxious as himself to improve the land. His rents, which in 1776 were £2,200, rose to £20,000 by 1816. Of course, not all landlords were of this enlightened kind, nor were all farmers

The challenge given by Mr. COKE of Norfolk, at the late sheep-shearing at *Woburn*, to the Leicestershire breeders, with a view to ascertain the comparative excellence of the *new Leicestershire*, and the *South-Down* breed of sheep, was not, as has been fallaciously stated, in all the papers, refused by the latter. On the contrary, the Leicestershire breeders told Mr. COKE, that if he would reduce his proposition to writing, so that it might be clearly understood, and all possibility of evasion avoided, they would willingly stake five hundred guineas on the superiority of their own breed. This Mr. COKE declined, and in a manner that evidently showed he was convinced that the superior excellence of the *South-Down* sheep was not to be supported.

RIVALRY IN BREEDING. A newspaper cutting of the nineties.

willing to follow a new lead. Coke estimated that his improvements travelled about one mile a year.

**Wars and their effect.** Enclosures undoubtedly increased prices, but it was war that ran them up to famine level. While wheat rose between 1765 and 1776 about 40 per cent., by 1812 Arthur Young estimated that the price of all provisions had risen 134½ per cent., and now the labourer had to buy at full retail prices, since capitalist farmers produced for big markets and refused to sell bushels and quarters even to their own employees. War forced England to the effort to feed itself, and at the same time imposed heavy taxation. The average price of wheat between 1791 and 1801 was nearly 76s. a quarter, and famine

years brought it up to 128s. 6d. One writer has called Napoleon the 'patron saint not only of farmers but of landlords'.<sup>1</sup>

Peace produced a drop to 67s., and later 60s.; the agriculturists were aghast, and a new corn law in 1804 raised the level at which corn might be imported to 63s. However, war again came to the help of the farmers, and the average price from 1805 to 1813 rose to 100s. 4d., and profits and rents soared together.

	l.	s.	d.
1000 <b>B</b> ullocks, at 6l. 2-piece	6000	00	00
6000 Sheep, at 12s. 2-piece	3600	00	00
2000 Calves at 12l. 4s. 2-piece	2400	00	00
3000 Lambs, at 3s. 2-piece, for six months	1200	00	30
1500 Hogs in pork and bacon, at 20s. 2-piece for six months	1500	00	00
2000 Pigs, at 2s. 6d. 2-piece	250	00	00
1000 Turkeys, at 3s. 6d. 2-piece for six months	175	00	00
1000 Geese at 2s. 6d. 2-piece for six months	125	00	00
2000 Capons, at 1s. 8d. 2-piece	166	13	02
3000 Pullets, at 1s. 2d. 2-piece	175	00	00
500 Dozen of chickens at 9s. per dozen	156	05	00
4300 Ducks at 9d. 2-piece	161	05	00
1500 Do. of rabbits, at 7s. per doz. for 8 months	525	00	00
2000 Doz. of pigeons at 2s. per doz. for 8 months	200	00	00

LOW PRICES OF 1750. From *The London Magazine* Feb. 1750.

Peace in 1815 brought a drop, in spite of a new corn law excluding import till the price was 80s.

Some of these fluctuations were due to bad harvests, but war aggravated the evil, since import was almost impossible. The war-taxes were colossal. In 1815 a Herefordshire farmer showed that the taxes and rates on a 300-acre farm were over £380,

<sup>1</sup> Prothero, *English Farming*, p. 211.



TABLE of the Affize and Price of STANDARD WHEATEN BREAD, in TWO PARTS.—According to an ACT passed in the 13th Year of GEORGE III.

No. I. Price of a Bushel of Wheat, and Rating	No. II. The Affize Table.						No. I. Price of a Bushel of Wheat and Rating	No. II. The Price Table.					
	SMALL BREAD.			LARGE ASSIZED BREAD.				PRICED BREAD.					
	Penny		Two pence	Sixpence		Twelve Pence		Eighteen Pence.	Quartern Loaf.		Half Pk. Loaf.		Peck Loaf.
s. d.	lb. oz. dr.	lb. oz. dr.	lb. oz. dr.	lb. oz. dr.	lb. oz. dr.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	
1 0	25 4	3 2 9	9 7 11	18 15 5	28 7 0	1 0	0 2½	0 5½	0 11	0 14	0 14	0 14	
1 0	23 3	2 14 5	8 11 0	17 6 1	26 1 1	1 0	0 3	0 6	0 10	0 10	0 10	0 10	
1 0	21 6	2 10 12	8 0 5	16 0 11	24 1 0	1 0	0 3½	0 6½	0 11	0 11	0 11	0 11	
1 0	19 14	2 7 12	7 7 3	14 14 5	22 5 8	1 0	0 3	0 7	0 10	0 10	0 10	0 10	
1 0	13 9	2 5 1	6 15 4	13 14 7	20 13 11	1 0	0 3½	0 7½	0 11	0 11	0 11	0 11	
4 0	17 6	2 2 14	6 8 4	13 0 9	19 8 13	4 0	0 4	0 8	0 14	0 14	0 14	0 14	
4 0	15 6	2 0 11	6 2 2	12 4 4	18 6 7	4 0	0 4½	0 8½	0 14½	0 14½	0 14½	0 14½	
4 0	15 7	1 14 4	5 12 11	11 9 6	17 6 1	4 0	0 4	0 8	0 14	0 14	0 14	0 14	
4 0	14 10	1 13 4	5 7 13	10 15 10	16 7 7	4 0	0 4	0 8	0 14	0 14	0 14	0 14	
5 0	13 14	1 11 13	5 3 7	10 6 13	15 10 4	5 0	0 5	0 10	0 15	0 15	0 15	0 15	
5 0	13 4	1 10 8	4 15 7	9 14 14	14 14 5	5 0	0 5½	0 10½	0 15½	0 15½	0 15½	0 15½	
5 0	13 10	1 9 4	4 11 13	9 7 11	14 3 8	5 0	0 5	0 10	0 15	0 15	0 15	0 15	
5 0	12 1	1 8 3	4 8 9	9 1 1	13 9 10	5 0	0 5	0 10	0 15	0 15	0 15	0 15	
6 0	11 9	1 7 3	4 5 8	8 11 1	13 0 9	6 0	0 6	0 10	0 15	0 15	0 15	0 15	
6 0	11 2	1 6 4	4 2 12	8 5 8	12 8 3	6 0	0 6	0 10	0 15	0 15	0 15	0 15	
6 0	10 5	1 5 6	4 0 3	8 0 5	12 0 8	6 0	0 6	0 10	0 15	0 15	0 15	0 15	
6 0	10	1 4 10	3 13 13	7 11 9	11 9 6	6 0	0 6	0 10	0 15	0 15	0 15	0 15	
7 0	9 15	1 3 14	3 11 9	7 7 3	11 2 12	7 0	0 7	1 2	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	
7 0	9 9	1 3 3	3 9 8	7 3 1	10 12 9	7 0	0 7	1 2	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	
7 0	9 4	1 2 9	3 7 10	6 15 4	10 6 13	7 0	0 7	1 2	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	
7 0	9 0	1 1 15	3 5 13	6 11 10	10 1 7	7 0	0 7	1 2	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	
8 0	8 11	1 1 6	3 4 2	6 8 4	9 12 7	8 0	0 8	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	
8 0	8 7	1 0 14	3 2 9	6 5 2	9 7 11	8 0	0 8	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	
8 0	8 3	1 0 6	3 1 1	6 2 2	9 3 3	8 0	0 8	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	
8 0	7 15	0 15 14	2 15 11	5 15 5	8 15 0	8 0	0 8	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	1 4	
9 0	7 12	0 15 7	2 14 5	5 12 11	8 11 0	9 0	0 9	1 6	1 6	1 6	1 6	1 6	
9 0	7 8	0 15 0	2 13 1	5 10 3	8 7 4	9 0	0 9	1 6	1 6	1 6	1 6	1 6	
9 0	7 5	0 14 10	2 11 14	5 7 13	8 3 11	9 0	0 9	1 6	1 6	1 6	1 6	1 6	
9 0	7 2	0 14 4	2 10 12	5 5 9	8 0 5	9 0	0 9	1 6	1 6	1 6	1 6	1 6	
10 0	6 15	0 13 14	2 9 11	5 3 7	7 13 2	10 0	0 10	1 8	1 8	1 8	1 8	1 8	
10 0	6 13	0 13 9	2 8 11	5 1 6	7 10 1	10 0	0 10	1 8	1 8	1 8	1 8	1 8	
10 0	6 10	0 13 4	2 7 12	4 15 7	7 7 3	10 0	0 10	1 8	1 8	1 8	1 8	1 8	
10 0	6 7	0 12 15	2 6 13	4 13 10	7 4 6	10 0	0 10	1 8	1 8	1 8	1 8	1 8	

AN EXPLANATION of the preceding TABLE.

PART the FIRST, or the ASSIZE-TABLE, contains, in Column No. I. the Price of the Bushel of Wheat, Winchester Measure, from 2s. 6d. to 10s. 6d. the Bushel, the Allowance of the Magistrates to the Baker for Baking included:— And in Column No. II. are the Weights of the several Loaves. So that at whatever Price of the Bushel of Wheat with the Allowance, the Magistrates shall set the Affize, the same Price of Wheat is to be found in Column No. I. and even therewith in Column No. II. will be found the Weights of the several Loaves.

PART the SECOND, or the PRICE TABLE, contains, in Column No. I. the Price of the Bushel of Wheat, Winchester Measure, from 2s. 6d. to 10s. 6d. the Bushel, the Allowance of the Magistrates to the Baker for Baking included:— And in Column No. II. are the Prices of the Peck, Half-Peck, and Quartern Loaves.

Note, That the Standard Wheaten Peck-Loaf is always to weigh 19 lb. 6 oz. Averdupois, and the Half-Peck and Quartern Loaves in proportion; and when the said Peck-Loaf is sold for Fourteen-pence, the Wheat Peck-Loaf is to be sold for Sixteen-pence, and the Household Peck-Loaf is to be sold for Twelve-pence, and always as near as may be in the same proportion. No Half-Quartern Loaves are to be made.

Note. That the same Weight of Standard Wheaten affized Bread as 6s. Seven-pence, of Wheaten affized Bread will cost Eight-pence, and of Household affized Bread Six-pence: Or, Seven Standard affized Loaves will weigh Eight Wheaten affized Loaves, or Six Household affized Loaves of the same Price, as near as may be.

Note, That this Table is framed for Bread to be made of the whole Produce of the Wheat, except the Bran or Hull thereof only; the said Produce to weigh three-fourths of the Wheat whereof it is made.

This Table should be preserved in every Family, as it at once points out the Weight and Price of Bread in proportion to the Price of Wheat.

RISEING PRICES. The Act of 1773 gave a scale for the price of bread

and in 1833 it was estimated that a labourer earning £22 10s. a year paid £11 7s. 7d. in indirect taxes. And war not only brings taxes, it often upsets the currency. Even before the Napoleonic war the issue of paper money was largely increased, not only by the Bank of England, but by private banks. Money being plentiful, prices rose accordingly.<sup>1</sup> There had been a crash in 1793, and 350 banks stopped payment, and in 1797 another crisis was only partially avoided. In the same year the Bank of England suspended gold payment, and by 1814 240 banks stopped payment and much of the paper currency became

*Enormous Poor's-Rate* — A correspondent states, that the poor's rate in Hinckley, in Leicestershire, amounts to 52 shillings in the pound. Nearly two thirds of the town are in a state of pauperism. During the last week, several persons of respectable appearance in Walsall, have been distrained upon for their rates, when it appeared that they were totally without bedding, and other ordinary comforts, which had been previously sacrificed to exactions of the tax-gatherer.

From *The Liverpool Mercury*, Nov. 22, 1816.

worthless. It has been estimated that one-fifth of the high prices of agricultural produce in 1812 was due to the chaotic state of the currency. Peace brought a drop in prices, but not a release from taxation, and the weight of this fell on those least able to bear it.

**Changes in the Poor Law.** Meanwhile the increasing poverty of the worker was becoming evident in the rise of the poor-rates. About 1750 the poor rate for the country amounted to £700,000, by 1776 it had risen to £1,500,000, by 1786 to £2,000,000. Part of the rise was no doubt due to the increase of population, which between 1750 and 1800 rose from 5½ to 9 millions. Wages were entirely below subsistence level at current prices at any time after 1765. Hasbach reckons that the average in the south before the rise of prices was 1s. a day, and between 1775 and 1790 only 2d. higher; <sup>2</sup> by 1803 they had risen about 40 per cent.,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Hasbach, *History of the English Agricultural Labourer*, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES!

Two parishes in Shropshire are taxed for the poor at the rate of 16s. 8d. in the pound, and all the lauds in the parish are taxed as high as 30s. per acre! It appears that the poor of the whole county of Cardigan, as well as a great part of the adjacent county, have been without fuel during the whole winter, in consequence of the inclement weather of the last autumn having destroyed their provision of turf!

Nothing can be more decisive of the state of the country, than the diminished consumption of the leading articles subject to the duties of excise. The falling off has been progressive during the present quarter. It is stated to be upwards of £600,000.

A parliamentary document, lately laid before the House of Commons, shows the produce of the assessed taxes for the year ending the 5th of January last, to be less than that of the preceding year by four hundred and thirty-one thousand six hundred and sixty-seven pounds. Under every one of the heads of charge, from which the total is made up, there is a deficiency. The total of these charges for the year ending January 5, 1815, was £6,414,641;—more by six hundred and twenty-eight thousand three hundred and eighteen pounds than that of the year now concluded.

Tea.—By a statement in the *Times* newspaper, we learn, that in the two last years there had been a falling off in the consumption of tea, in Great Britain, of above four millions of pounds, and consequently in the *ad valorem* duties of about one million one hundred thousand pounds.

On Wednesday se'ennight, an inquest was held at the Mitre, Broadwall, on the body of C. Fowler, a tailor, but who had been out of work most part of the winter; and since last Christmas his parish allowed him 3s. per week, which was the sole support of his wife and two children. The week preceding his death, his wife was brought to bed, and the parish increased his pension on that account to 7s. which he went to receive on Monday se'ennight; but was so weak, that a woman who attended his wife in her lying-in, went out of humanity with him to the workhouse, and having received the money, they were returning home, when he dropped down in Gravel-lane, and expired on the spot. He had a sixpence in his pocket besides what he received as above; and it is remarkable that a difference of opinion existed among the jury, some being for a verdict of:—"Starved to death." It was, however, at length decided, in consequence of his having money in his pocket, that he died a natural death! A verdict was accordingly returned—"Died by the visitation of God."

but prices were up anything from 50 per cent. to 400 per cent. Obviously, if wages could not rise the poor-rate must. The real remedy was, of course, a statutory minimum wage, compelling farmers to pay a living wage, but the Government would have none of it, and finding in 1812 that the old laws empowering the justices to fix wages were still in existence, they promptly repealed them. Whitbread made two great efforts in 1796 and 1800 to establish the power to enact minimum wages, but was foiled by the opposition of Pitt and the great landlords. The only other suggestion of a remedy for low wages was a change of diet on the part of the labourers! Such being the situation, the labourers fell back on the Poor Law. There were in practice three main methods of relief for the able-bodied.

(a) THE ROUNDSMAN SYSTEM. (a) A labourer out of work might be leased to the farmer by the overseers at a certain price and the poor-rate added the sum necessary to raise this to a living wage, extra allowances being made for each child; (β) the farmer paid the parish for the man's work and the parish paid the man; (γ) the labourer might be sold by auction weekly or monthly, the farmer whose offer left the least sum over to be found by the rates securing his services.

(b) THE LABOUR-RATE SYSTEM. Ratepayers undertook to employ a certain number of paupers in lieu of paying their rates.

(c) Paupers worked in GANGS under foremen, the farmer paying the overseers for the gang.

The workhouses, which had been increased in number in 1722, were filled with the sick, the old, and the children in a chaotic herd, amid surroundings of unspeakable misery and degradation.

But the principle of subsidized labour reached its climax in what became known as the SPEENHAMLAND SYSTEM. Its origin is a strange instance of the part chance plays in English affairs. Some Berkshire justices, appalled at the misery around them, met in 1795 in the Pelican Inn at Speenhamland (now a part of Newbury) to decide on a scale of minimum wages. A party

of eighteen, of whom seven were clergy, met with this object ; what happened at the discussion is not known, but the decision was, not to fix wages, but to supplement them by poor-relief. A scale was drawn up allowing a fixed sum for each member of the family, and if the man's earnings did not come to so much the overseers were to make it up. The fixed sum varied with the price of corn, and was based on an allowance of 26 lb. of



CLERKENWELL WORKHOUSE as enlarged in 1790.

bread a week for the man and at half that rate for his wife and each child. This scheme was not the invention of this meeting, but they standardized the scale, and it spread rapidly through the country. The stupidity of one generation often seems incredible to its descendants, and it is difficult for us to understand how the men of 1795 could be so blind to the effect of their deeds. Such a system was bound to turn the rural population into a mass of state-fed paupers, and the injustice of throwing the cost of farm labour on the whole of the ratepayers would seem obvious. Certainly it hastened the end of the small farmer, for while he employed little or no labour himself, he was thus

compelled to pay part of the cost of that of the big farms. These two results they might at least have foreseen, but the moral degradation of the rural areas was an even greater disaster. In the first place good and bad work alike secured a mere subsistence; in the next, farmers preferred pauper labour as cheaper, and a man often had to make himself a pauper before he could obtain work; if he had saved a few possessions he must get rid of them before he was able to earn anything.

Lastly, children became a paying concern, for each new birth added another 1s. 6d. to the weekly allowance, and the illegitimate birth-rate rose rapidly. In thirty years the rural population changed from a sturdy race of hard-working independent peasant farmers to two sharply opposed classes of very well-to-do farmers employing considerable capital on large farms and a landless proletariat living partly on doles, from whom had been taken every incentive to good work, thrift, or temperate living.

The pressure of a pauperized class of labourers became so great that attempts were made to lessen the strain; parish authorities kept a stricter watch on immigrants and lawsuits between parishes were incessant, so that in 1815 the money spent on litigation and removal of paupers amounted to £287,000. In 1819 the appointment of salaried overseers was allowed, with the result that the administration of the Poor Law was made much harsher. The salaried overseers were universally hated, though the ratepayer was a little relieved. After the fall in prices the rates of allowance were steadily decreased. In Northamptonshire by 1816 they had fallen so low that a man and wife were allowed, as estimated in pounds of bread, little more than the man alone in 1795; and in Wiltshire, in 1817, it was still lower. The allowance in 1831 for a family of four was two-thirds of that in 1795.

**Rural England in 1833.** How then did the labourer live, since even rate-subsidized wages were reduced below subsistence limit? He lived chiefly by reducing his standard below the level at which full strength and energy can be maintained. Meat, butter, and even cheese disappeared almost entirely from

his diet, milk left the poor man's dwelling along with his cow, and tea took the place of both milk and beer; even for children tea was often the only drink. His cottage was a mere hovel, often dumped by the side of the road, his children ran in rags. There were, however, two resources by which he might stave off actual starvation: the charity of the rich or the appropriation of their game. Of the former there was a considerable amount; it was still regarded as a Christian virtue, and practised by many of the large proprietors and their wives and daughters. The spirit in which such help was given was too often such as to encourage mean-spirited sponging and to penalize any exhibition of independence and self-respect. As to poaching, it became almost universal, and was regarded by the villager as a legitimate act. Certainly, without it, many families would have starved.

The change in seventy years has been forcibly summarized thus: 'The peasant with rights and a status, with a share in the fortunes and government of his village, standing in rags but standing on his feet, makes way for the labourer with no corporate rights to defend, no corporate power to invoke, no property to cherish, no ambition to pursue, bent beneath the fear of his masters, and the weight of a future without hope.'<sup>1</sup>

What of the yeomanry, of whom Geoffrey King had estimated there were in England 160,000 in 1688? They had largely disappeared. A few had become rich and passed into the ranks of the gentry, most had sold their holdings and either used the money to rent and stock larger ones, or had drifted into the towns. In the bad fall of prices after 1813 many went bankrupt, having speculated in land no longer profitable; others went under from the weight of excessive taxation. As the number of small farms decreased, their price rose and made the existence of small-farming still more difficult. Hasbach is of opinion that the smaller yeomen and copyholders suffered almost as much by enclosures as the landless cottagers.

The smaller gentry, too, were ruined, and their sons either rented large farms or left the land altogether for the professions

or commerce. The East Indies received many. Small-farming did survive in some counties, e. g. Sussex, Cambridgeshire, Yorkshire, and Durham.

Thus the intermediate ranks of the rural population dropped out, and capitalist employers and proletarian labourers stood face to face with an unbridgeable gulf between.

Yet the story of these years had not been entirely one of prosperity to the capitalist. From 1814 to 1830 had been a terrible time of depression, and tenant farmers had failed by thousands. The chief cause was the crushing burden of taxes and rates. The war had doubled the price of wheat, but it had multiplied the national expenditure by five, and enclosures and Speenhamland had quadrupled the poor-rate. The apparent profits of the war period had caused land to reach fancy prices, and the standard of living of both landowner and tenant had risen considerably. At the fall of prices came panic and failure. Land went out of cultivation, work was scarce, and the labourer was eventually driven to revolt.

By 1833 things were being adjusted, but it was the landowner who found the capital this time, not the tenant farmer.

**Summary.** There are seven factors tending to the break up of the old English village :

1. Enclosures, and the selfish and reckless way in which they were carried out.
2. Rise of the price of provisions, partly caused by enclosures.
3. New methods of cultivation which demanded a different class of men and larger capital.
4. The system of larger farms, which were economically more productive.
5. The more luxurious standard of living that was adopted by the landlord class.
6. The increased taxation due to the war, which raised the cost of living.
7. The attraction of the growing industries of the towns.

Though many remedies for the misery of the rural population were suggested, the only one adopted was an extension of poor



relief, which resulted in the degradation and pauperization of the workers.

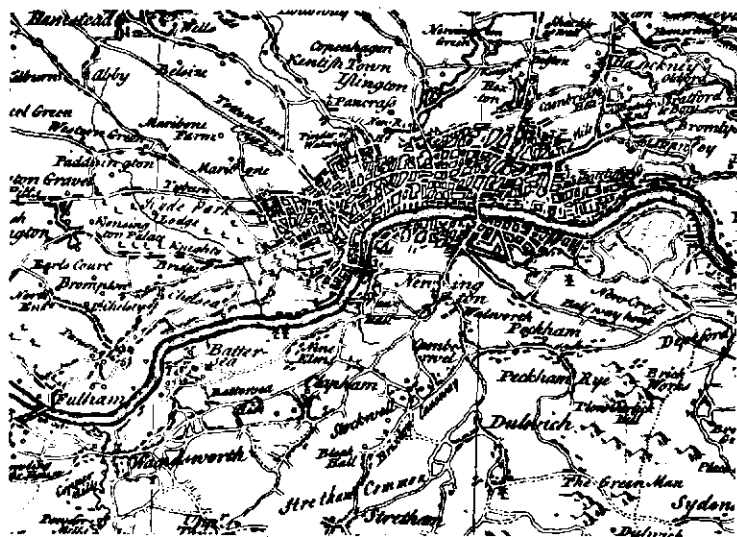
'Summing up therefore the economic results of the whole mass of little village revolutions under examination we find increased production of all sorts of commodities, increased national resources for purposes of taxation and foreign war. The moral effects we find to have been increased misery and recklessness, showing itself in increased pauperism and drunkenness. An increase in the quantity of human life is attained at the expense of a degradation in its quality.'<sup>1</sup>

## 2. The Industrial Revolution

WE have seen that during the eighty-three years of the period we are now considering both the outward face and the economic structure of rural England were changed out of all knowledge, what then of the towns? In 1750 most of the towns of England were still the small market towns of the Middle Ages, a little larger, somewhat better built—much was stone that had been wood—but still in rural surroundings, fed by the adjacent districts, and, in civic life, sleepier than they had been four hundred years before. Even London, though it had grown enormously, still had its rural areas of Kensington, Fulham, and Hammer-smith, and 'people of rank to correct their tone went out of town to Marybone'. Manchester was not even a borough, and was governed by a Constable responsible to the lord of the manor, who lived in Derbyshire. Even busy centres of industry like Norwich, Bradford (in Wiltshire), Sheffield, or Birmingham lacked all the features that we now associate with an industrial area. Instead of towering blocks of factories, 100-ft. chimneys belching black smoke, rows and rows of mean, ugly houses, clanging trams, granite setts from which the riot of wheels re-echoes to blocks of offices and warehouses, we should have found irregularly built groups of often rather tumble-down cottages straggling out into the countryside, each with its bit of land growing larger as we left the centre of the town. In

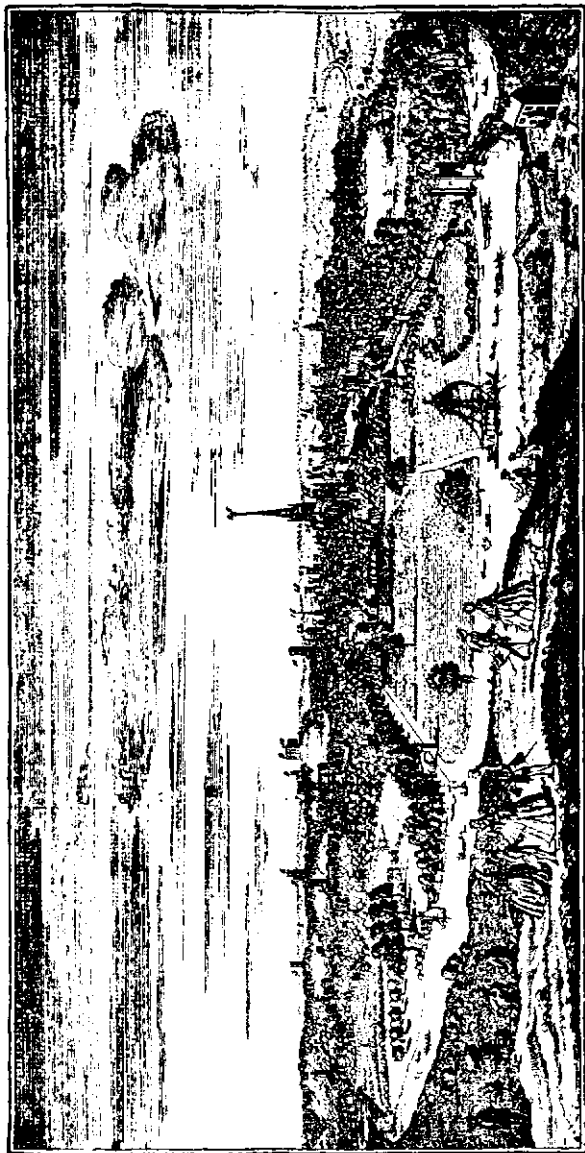
<sup>1</sup> Slater, *The English Peasantry and Enclosure of Common Fields*, 1907, p. 266.

that centre would be a town hall, a produce market, a wool or cloth hall, or some place for selling the results of the local industry, where, with much noise and leisurely bargaining, the goods made on cottage looms, in sheds, and outbuildings, were sold by the men who had made them. Just as in the villages of the time, so there were in the towns many grades of men,



EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON

a ladder of improving status from the wage-earning journeyman, unskilled or skilled, through craftsmen such as blacksmith, cooper, and publican, small master, larger master, to well-to-do merchant, banker, lawyer, doctor, and civic dignitaries. Meadows and open fields mixed with the outlying houses—the town was only an overgrown village. By 1834 the fields and commons had largely disappeared, the centre of the town was no longer a market to which each seller brought the work of his hands; the small man, half manufacturer, half farmer, had gone from the outskirts. Already in dozens of towns the now familiar



The South-East Prospect of the CITY of NORWICH.

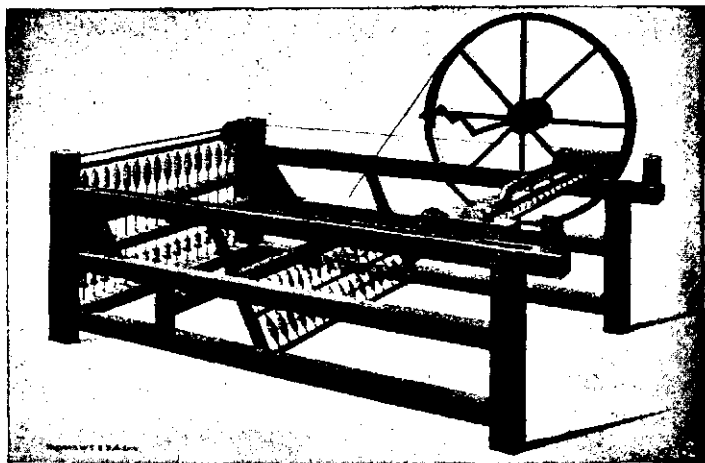
From *The Universal Magazine*, 1753

factory blocks were appearing, over the green fields were spreading, like an evil fungus, thousands of hovels built, not for homes, but as mere shelters for the swarms of 'hands' demanded by the new system; the small master was nearly gone, leaving face to face the well-to-do employer and a landless wage-earning proletariat sunk to a standard of life lower, relatively to that of the better-off classes, than the western world had known for fourteen centuries. Even worse, if possible, than the old towns swamped by the tide of incoming capitalism were the mushroom growths of mere villages, without any civic tradition of organization, that arose round the mills dumped by the new enterprise on any convenient spot, towns which were no towns, merely groups of wretched hutments in which slept the slaves of the new order, dependent on their masters' shops for food and drink and clothing, possessed of one liberty only, the liberty to starve. 'They were not the refuge of a civilisation but the barracks of an industry.'

The story we have now to tell is the story of this change.

**Capitalist Tendencies before the Advent of Machinery.** It would be a mistake to assert that this change sprang suddenly on English life because certain men, with no determining cause, started inventing machinery. Machinery gave to a current already obvious in the stream of our social life the force of a cataract, by which it bore away most of the ancient landmarks, but the current had already started before Hargreaves and Arkwright and the rest had even dreamed a dream. Capitalistic industry, we have seen, was at least as old as the fifteenth century, and Adam Smith said in 1776 that in every part of Europe twenty workmen served under a master for one that was independent. Before any machinery had appeared many spinners in the textile trades had given up buying their own wool and cotton, and merely received it from travelling merchants and were paid for their work on it only. This was a first step away from the state of buying your own raw material, working on it, and then re-selling the worked article. It was substituting piecework wages for the craftsman's profits. Already

in the very early eighteenth century the journeyman tailor, destined to be a life-long wage-earner, was common; the capitalist had appeared as the owner of the fashionable tailor's shop in place of the working craftsman who made up 'customer's own materials'. In the West of England woollen industry capitalist control was already dominant, though the organization was still domestic. The framework knitters of Nottingham and



HARGREAVES' SPINNING-JENNY, patented in 1764.

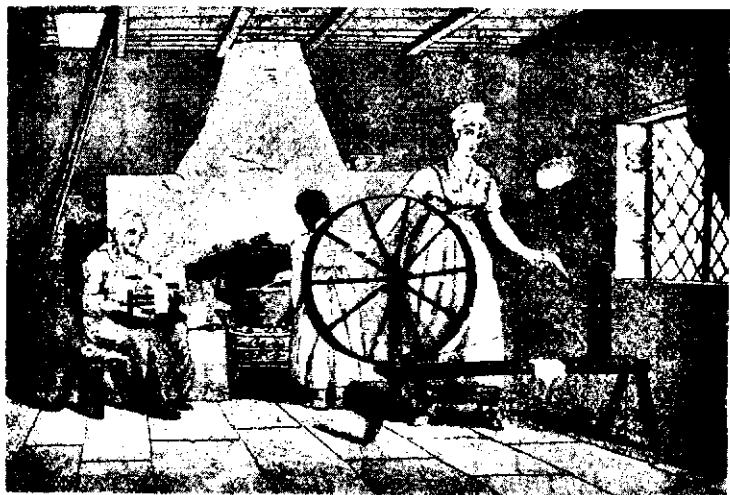
Leicester worked on frames hired from, and on yarn supplied by, their masters, men with capital who merely organized the trade.

**Mechanical Inventions.** Society was thus ripe for the adoption of any new methods that involved capital outlay and energetic organization. The invention of the flying shuttle<sup>1</sup> had made still greater the difficulty, already considerable, of securing enough yarn to keep pace with the weaver. Weavers wasted much time going round the country collecting yarn from out-lying houses and cottages, often bribing the women by the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 280.

present of a ribbon or a new cap to spin faster. To meet the need, HARGREAVES, in 1765, invented the spinning-jenny, by which at first eight and later one hundred spindles could be worked by one wheel. The output of yarn was largely increased, but spinning-jennies could be worked in the cottages, as before the single wheel had been. The next invention foreshadowed the great change. In 1769 ARKWRIGHT patented a machine for spinning by rollers worked by water-power. Roller spinning had been invented thirty years before, but came to nothing. In this method the wool or flax was spun by being drawn between pairs of rollers, the second pair moving faster than the first—so giving the pulling effect of the arm movement in hand spinning. Arkwright's water-frames were the true pioneers of the new industry, since they had to be worked together in factories placed where water-power was obtainable. This method produced a stronger thread than had hitherto been possible for cotton, and henceforth pure cotton goods could be made with warp-thread spun in Arkwright's mills. Hitherto cotton goods had had linen or woollen warp. These frames had the added advantage from the manufacturer's standpoint that children could work them, while the large jennies required much skill and strength. Arkwright followed up this invention by machines for carding, drawing, and roving, about 1775.

In 1779 came CROMPTON'S mule, so called because it borrowed features from the jenny and the water-frame. It had both rollers and spindles, and produced a very strong, fine thread, which made it possible to make fine muslin in England. Before this only the supple fingers of Indian hand spinners could make fine enough thread. Yet for a long time spinning remained almost a domestic industry, and such factories as there were were small. A man could start in a shed with one mule and increase his plant gradually. Even in the cotton industry it took over twenty years to transfer the spinner to the factory. There was, however, a change; the spinster became a spinner, for the mules required the strength of men. About 1782 WATT invented his steam-engine, and it was first used for spinning at



THE REVOLUTION IN SPINNING.

Papplewick in 1785; by the end of the century water-mills ceased to be built, and steam factories were common. Lastly, by 1825, a satisfactory self-acting mule was achieved, and the work of a spinner became that of a supervisor of several machines.

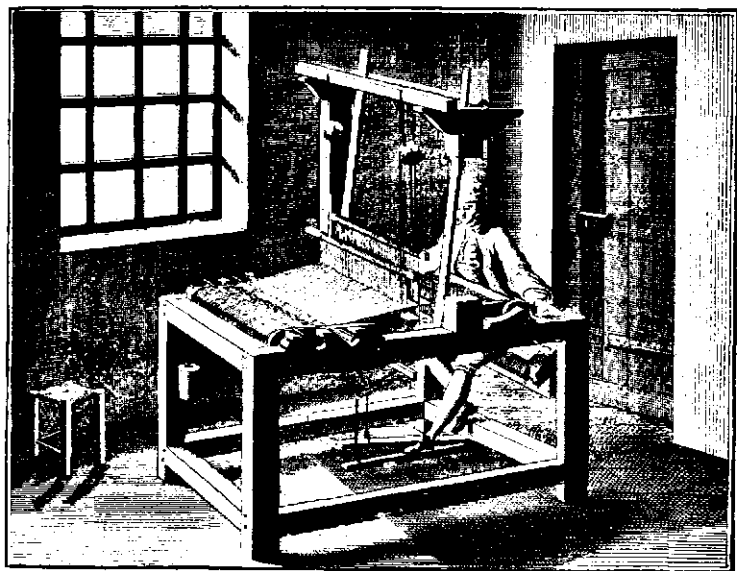


CRANK MILL, Morley, Yorkshire. Built in 1790, this mill was driven by steam and was the first to be erected in the neighbourhood.

Long before this, however, the quantity of yarn spun had overtaken the capacity of the weaver to absorb it, and the next move forward was in the loom. In 1785 CARTWRIGHT invented a power-loom, a clumsy instrument at first, which was gradually improved. It was not, however, in general use for cotton weaving till after 1834,<sup>1</sup> though common after 1810, and it was still later in the woollen industry. In 1790-2 he devised the first wool-

<sup>1</sup> In 1829-31 there were 225,000 hand-loom and 80,000 power-loom in the cotton industry in Great Britain.





THE REVOLUTION IN WEAVING

combing machine, which eventually revolutionized the worsted industry. The story of these inventors is interesting as illustrating two points: first, that the need produced the device; secondly, that the financial advantages of the invention rarely went to its originator. JAMES HARGREAVES was a working weaver near Blackburn, illiterate and possessed of no capital. He tried at first to keep his invention secret, using it only himself. It was discovered, however, and broken up by a mob. Hargreaves then left his native place for Nottingham, and with a partner erected a small mill and patented his jenny. His patent was grossly infringed, and Hargreaves died in 1778, not in poverty, but only possessed of a few hundred pounds. The history of SIR RICHARD ARKWRIGHT, sometime travelling barber and eventually knight and high sheriff of his county, was somewhat different. How far he was actually the inventor of the machines that bore his name can hardly now be settled; possibly, like Kipling's Sir Anthony Gloster, he was 'no fool to finish if a man'll give me a hint'. There is no doubt, however, that he was past-master in the arts of push and organization, and possessed of a perseverance and resourcefulness that never failed. He was able to convince men with money of the great promise of his machines, and he never ceased improving them year after year. In spite of the success of the challengers of his patents in getting them set aside, he succeeded in making a large fortune, and died in 1792, having 'made himself and a million' by working sixteen hours a day and seeing to it that 'whoever lost, he was a gainer'. He was the first, but not the last of the men whom the new system enabled to rise from the lowest rank to place and power.

SAMUEL CROMPTON, like Hargreaves, was a working weaver, and like him, too, he aimed merely at improving his own output. The excellence and fineness of his yarn aroused curiosity, and as he took out no patent, others used and improved his work with no benefit to him. In 1812 Parliament granted him £5,000 in recognition of the benefit to industry of his machine. This he invested in a bleaching business for his sons, who quickly

lost it, and Crompton and his daughter were reduced to poverty. A small annuity of £63 was bought for him by his friends, which he enjoyed for two years, dying in 1827, leaving his daughter unprovided for.

JAMES WATT, who began life as a scientific instrument maker, was more fortunate. Thanks to the extraordinary patent privileges bestowed on him by Parliament in 1769 and 1775, which secured his invention to him for twenty-five years, he was able to prevent any one else making steam-engines, while he perfected his own and incidentally made a large fortune.

The fate of EDMUND CARTWRIGHT was more usual, but his story is much more extraordinary. All the others were men who by their past experience had at least some acquaintance with simple mechanism. Cartwright was a clergyman and a scholar, living the life of leisurely ease of an eighteenth-century parson, when one summer day in 1784 he met at Matlock some Manchester men talking about spinning machinery and the problem of the probable production of more yarn than could be woven. Laughed at when he suggested the possibility of weaving by machinery, he took up the challenge, went home, and without even troubling to see a loom, devised a mechanical one of which he was very proud, and which he patented. As it took two strong men to work it slowly, its utility was nil, and at this point he decided to see an ordinary loom at work. By 1787 he had devised and patented a practical machine. But it was still very imperfect, and Cartwright, who gave up his profession and invested his private means in the new industry, got his affairs utterly tangled, and even a grant of £10,000 from Parliament in 1809 failed to set him right.

In 1801 JOSEPH MARIE JACQUARD of Lyons invented the Jacquard loom to enable elaborate patterns to be woven. It can be used for all kinds of weaving, but is specially advantageous for silk.

Such sudden changes in the space of some fifty years coming at a time when the last traces of mediaeval organization were being swept away, were almost bound to produce chaos. The

men of the time seemed to grow drunk with the limitless vistas of gain that were opening before them. Any one who could get together or borrow a little capital could start with a mule or two and a few children to work them, and with industry and luck be a wealthy mill-owner in a few years. Robert Owen started in one room with three men working hand-mules. The wildest speculation in overseas markets took place with occasional crashes, such as that of 1809 when the export of cotton goods nearly doubled in a year and the newly opened markets of South America were swamped with every kind of English goods, for which there were not even warehouses. The lack of intelligent organization is shown by the crates of cut-glass and elegant china sent to wild prairie lands and even of skates to the tropics. It is also obvious that the use of machinery greatly increased the interdependence of industries. The demand for iron and steel increased at the moment when the English industry was almost exhausted. Iron required coal as did the new steam factories, and at least three great industries became mutually indispensable. Again, the new industries were more and more specialized, and each individual became less and less self-sufficing. A break-down in one branch destroyed the market of another, the closing of a cotton factory cut off some of the market of the iron-worker and the miner and lessened their earnings, and all three would in time react on that of the farmer. It was a new complexity in human life and men had no plans as yet to meet it.

**Special Industries.** It will be well perhaps to look a little more closely at some typical special industries.

1. The COTTON industry stands out not only as being practically new, but as being the present type of the new system. It was not absolutely new, but before 1760 it was small and dependent on wool and linen yarn for its warp. Pure cottons could not be made in England. It may have been chance that started the early cotton-workers in Lancashire, it was not chance that kept the industry there. Arkwright's spinning machine needed water-power, and eastern Lancashire is full of little mountain streams. When steam took the place of water, Lanca-

shire had coal ready to hand. Even more important, as it turned out, Lancashire had a climate. Cotton yarn requires warmth and moisture if it is to be spun fine, and Lancashire lacks nothing of the latter. Western winds, blowing off the ocean, strike the cold mountain barriers of the Pennines and descend in rain; the rains and mists that blot out the sun have given to Lancashire an advantage that so far no other country has succeeded in overtaking.

The freedom of the new industry from custom and tradition enabled it to adopt the new processes more quickly than others, often to the detriment of the workers, but to the great increase of total wealth. The import of raw cotton rose in the seventy years before 1833 from 3 million to 300 million lb. What is raw cotton? It is the product of a plant that grows in warm climates, whose pods when ripe burst open and disclose seeds embedded in a white or creamy mass of fibres, not quite straight like flax, nor quite curly like wool. A field of cotton when ripe is very beautiful, the globes of white wool shining out from a background of dark green leaves. Sometimes yellow flowers and ripe pods appear at the same time and add to the beauty. In some countries the cotton plant is a shrub or tree. The best quality comes from America, and is known as Sea Island cotton. Most of the cotton used in Lancashire comes from the United States or Egypt. The seeds are removed from the cotton by ginning before it is packed. The processes of the manufacture up to 1834 have all been mentioned already. The cotton wool was first cleaned and carded; from the carding machine it came in a loose twist about half an inch thick, called a sliver; this sliver was drawn out and given a slight twist by a process called roving, and then spun. The weaving followed and later bleaching and dyeing. The warps were sized before being put on the loom. All the new inventions were used first in cotton manufacture. Water-power was never used for weaving, for by the time the power-loom was established, steam-power was general. The effect of the early spinning machines was to bring great prosperity to the hand-

weavers, but from 1800 to 1830 their condition steadily declined, and by 1835 the power-loom had practically superseded them.

The subsidiary processes of bleaching and dyeing had kept pace in development with the rest. The old hand-process of bleaching had taken six to eight months to complete. In 1774 SCHEELE discovered chlorine, and in 1785 BERTHOLLET in France applied it to bleaching, and the eight months became two days. The 'grey cloth' was washed, boiled with lime, bleached by steeping in chloride of lime, steeped in weak acid, washed in an alkali, bleached again, and again steeped in acid. Cotton printing had been a very small industry before 1750. It had been done by means of hand-blocks of wood, and 28 yds. of cotton cloth required 448 applications of the block. In 1785 cylinder printing was first used, and was rapidly improved and cheapened. New methods of dyeing were also discovered.

By 1835 cotton was predominately a machine industry. The rate at which it developed produced a cut-throat competition among the masters, and it was the cotton trade for the most part that absorbed the influx of the workers from the rural areas and from Ireland.

2. Let us look at two industries that from being of secondary importance now rose to the first rank.

Although COAL was by the beginning of the eighteenth century in very general use for domestic purposes, the seams worked were all on or near the surface. These were comparatively safe and easy to work; water was the chief trouble, and this was overcome by opening long passages that drained it out to lower levels in the open, on what was known as the pit and adit system. The pits were not deep and the workings were made over a small radius from the bottom of the shaft. More than half the coal was left behind, as huge 'pillars' of coal larger than the worked-out passages had to be left to support the rocks above. Sometimes 'walls of coal' were left instead of pillars, sometimes the coal was worked out in a kind of pocket. Only natural ventilation was used—a down-draught of air in one shaft and an up-draught in the other caused by difference of levels; the speed



THE COAL INDUSTRY. A view of the mouth of a Coal-Pit near Broseley in Shropshire, 1788

and quantity of the air currents varied with the season. By 1775 the lower strata were being attacked, and this proved to be very dangerous. The coal, especially in the Northumberland and Durham fields, was very fiery, and the ventilation of pits over 600 ft. deep became a serious problem. There was no known protection against the explosive fire-damp (carburetted hydrogen) except by diluting it by ventilation, and in deep pits this was often inadequate. It was improved by having a furnace to warm the air in the up-cast shaft, but since the air passing out was laden with fire-damp it often exploded as it passed the fire. The system, too, needed an elaborate management of doors and traps to prevent the air taking short cuts and leaving pockets of foul air, and the working of these doors was left in the hands of children. The presence of explosive gas made the lighting question difficult: one naked candle in contact with a pocket of gas might and did blow to nothingness the works of a large mine and all the workers in it. An invention called a steel mill was much used, by which the miner worked by the dim light of a rapid succession of sparks struck from a steel wheel, which was slightly, but only slightly, less dangerous than the candle, and as light, much less effective. Not till 1815, when SIR HUMPHRY DAVY invented the Safety Lamp, was any real protection available. Even then its introduction was slow, and a false sense of security often led to its use in places where, without other special precautions, it was of no avail; deeper and more fiery seams were opened up, often with fatal results.

The inadequacy for deeper mines of the pumping apparatus in use brought about the invention of the steam-engine for pumping, and this in turn made lower seams available. The first practical engine in which steam was used to create a vacuum had been invented by NEWCOMEN in 1712, and was used to work the pumps which were necessary to rid the lower seams of water, since they could not be drained to lower levels. In 1769 WATT patented a great improvement on Newcomen's engine by cooling the steam in a vessel separated from the cylinder and surrounding the cylinder itself with a steam jacket.



But as yet the machine could only work one way—it could push but not pull. In 1782 Watt arranged a mechanism by which the action was continuous, and so could be converted into rotary motion at will—the steam-engine as we know it was born.

Such being the condition of the mechanical processes of coal mining, it is not surprising to find that the early years of the nineteenth century were the most dangerous in mining history. Inquests were not usually held on mining accidents till after 1813. Between 1801-15, 415 lives are recorded to have been lost by explosion in the Tyne coal-fields alone. But it was not only in the risks of the work that the conditions of mining were bad. The owners of the collieries were chiefly aristocrats and large landowners, like Lord Londonderry, Lord Durham, and the Duke of Portland, and feudal conditions survived to a late date.

The miners of Scotland were, till 1799, still serfs bound to the soil, and though the English miners were nominally free they were far from being so in reality. We shall deal later with the conditions of children in the mines; <sup>1</sup> women worked in many, and in view of the hours could only have attended to their homes by additional night work. Wages were low, about 15s. a week, and in the lead mines 7s. to 8s. In Northumberland it was customary to engage miners by the year, and when the supply of labour became scarce owing to the growing demand for coal the owners in 1765 tried to bind the colliers to them by agreeing not to engage men unless they had a leaving certificate from their last master. This was practical slavery. The men also lived in 'tied cottages', i. e. owned by the mine-owners, and the usual answer to a strike was to turn the men out of their homes. One clerical owner did it when cholera was raging. There were other grievances, such as shops kept by the owners, at which the men ran bills and paid exorbitant prices, and on pay-day received only the balance of the money after their bills were paid. The owners, too, were not above

<sup>1</sup> See p. 366.



THE OLD DAYS. Iron Mines and their Preparations. Engraved about 1700



THE REVOLUTION IN IRON. 'An Iron Work, for casting of Cannon; and a Boring Mill.  
Taken from the Madeley side of the River Severn, Shropshire,' 1788

swindling the men, for one of the most hotly resisted of the reforms asked for was that one of themselves should check the weights of the corves of coal on which their wages were reckoned. They still suffered from all these grievances at the end of our period, in spite of the gallantly fought strike of 1831. In Staffordshire and Derbyshire the masters were not rich landowners, but working men called 'butties', to whom the pits were leased. The conditions here had all the evils and none of the mitigations of the feudal relationship. The small capitalist here, as in the cotton industry, was worse than the big one.

IRON. Towards the end of our last period the iron industry of England had sunk to a low level, and the production of crude pig iron had decreased to 17,350 tons annually. The Darbys' invention for using coke,<sup>1</sup> and about the same time that of Huntsman for making more homogeneous steel by remelting it in clay crucibles, gave a great impetus to production. It may be well to explain that there are three classes of manufactured iron, viz. cast iron, which contains more than 1.5 per cent. of carbon; steel, which has quantities varying between 0.5 and 1.5 per cent. of carbon; and malleable or wrought iron, containing less than 0.5 per cent. of carbon. Cast iron is brittle when cold, and cannot be hardened and tempered like steel. Wrought iron is nearly pure iron, and when hot assumes a pasty condition, in which it is easily welded; when cold it is ductile, but it also cannot be hardened and tempered. Steel is hard, and can be made harder by heating and cooling rapidly. It is also much stronger than either cast or wrought iron. At the beginning of this period cast iron was made by direct smelting of the ores and then remelting and pouring into moulds; wrought iron was cast iron decarburized in a 'finery'. Steel was made from pure wrought iron by heating it with charcoal and so introducing a limited amount of carbon. This process is called cementation.

In 1760 cylinders with close-fitting pistons were used instead of leather bellows to make the blast, and after 1783 the steam-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 280.



A 1788 engraving of the Iron Bridge over the Severn

engine came into rapid use to work the blast, to drive the forge-hammer, and to roll sheet into bar iron. In 1784 came the first great advance, CORT'S method of making wrought iron from cast iron, called PUDDLING. The old method of decarburizing iron by working in small hearths with charcoal was wasteful of labour and fuel. Cort arranged a reverberatory furnace, i.e. one in which the metal is not in contact with the fuel but heated by a flame bent down from the roof of the furnace. Coal could be used in this furnace instead of coke, and much bigger quantities of iron at a time. The carbon is oxidized in the process, and the purified iron collects into lumps, which the workman draws together with a bar and works into a ball weighing about 80 lb., which is then removed.

The demand for iron increased with the call for machines, and the first iron bridge was built in 1788 at Ironbridge over the Severn. (It was still in use in 1895.) So great was the quantity of iron required that in 1800 we were importing it, in spite of the increase in home manufacture.

In 1828 came a still more momentous step forward when J. B. NEILSEN introduced the HOT BLAST instead of using cold air. This reduced the fuel required, and consequently the cost, and enabled raw coal to be used direct. It laid the foundation of the prosperity of the Scotch iron trade, for it made possible the use of the ore known as blackland ironstone, in which Scotland is rich, and of the American because it allowed the use of anthracite coal:

In 1832 T. Oakes greatly improved the shape of the blast-furnace, increased its height from 40 ft. to 60 ft., also its capacity and the pressure of the blast. He gave Staffordshire the predominant position in the industry which it still holds. About the same time J. Hall improved the methods of puddling. By 1834 the iron industry (not the steel) was started on its modern path and ready to supply the ever-enlarging needs of the iron age, now well launched. The last charcoal-furnace in Sussex was blown out in 1827, and though a few lingered on in Scotland and Ulverstone, they were mere survivals.

The following figures give some idea of the increase in production :

In 1740 there were in England	59 furnaces producing	17,350 tons
„ 1788	„ „ 77	61,300 „
„ 1796	„ „ 104	108,700 „
„ 1820	„ „ 284	400,000 „
„ 1827	„ „ 284	690,500 „
„ 1839	„ „ 378	1,348,000 „

3. Next let us look at our oldest industry, WOOL. The first thing to notice is the shift to Yorkshire. It had, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> already begun. For centuries the West Riding had been the seat of a flourishing woollen manufacture worked on the domestic system. With the coming of machinery it rapidly developed one in worsted. The south-west of England had long had a highly capitalized industry, and it continued prosperous till about 1816; from that time it declined, and Yorkshire grew at its expense. The introduction of machinery was slower in the woollen than in the cotton manufacture. Even when spinning mills were firmly established, and later shearing and finishing factories, the intermediate process of weaving remained with the hand-loom. Hand-weaving of wool persisted much later than of cotton, and was the chief method even as late as 1858. The jenny was introduced in the south-west in 1776, in Yorkshire about 1780, and mules in both areas about 1826. Machinery was never introduced into the still older East Anglian industry, and by 1830 spinning as a domestic craft was dead.

The dates of the introduction of the flying-shuttle illustrate the slow rate at which alterations moved in the old-established industries. They range, even within the south-west district, from 1757 in Gloucestershire to 1822 in Somerset, and when it was introduced the workers were strong enough to secure the same piece-rates as before, thereby securing a 50 per cent. increase of wages. The fight against gig-mills and shearing-frames raged from 1802 to 1809 in the south-west, and till 1814 in Yorkshire. The gig-mills were machines for raising the nap of the cloth, work previously done by beating it with teasels; the shearing-frames had mechanical shears which took the place

<sup>1</sup> See p. 279.

of highly skilled hand-labour. From 1814 onwards the shearman sank lower and lower, and by 1820 had disappeared. One branch of the trade, that of wool-combing for worsted yarn, maintained its opposition to machinery as late as 1825, lingered on for another twenty-five years, vainly competing with the machines the men had tried to keep out, and then it too disappeared.

**Effect on the Lives of the Workers.** In what follows we shall try to picture the result on the lives of English men and women when the change was complete, or nearly so, remembering, how-

The Prince of Wales has subscribed 10,000*l.* to the National Fund; the Duke of York, half that amount, and each of the Princesses, 100*l.* a year during the war—a sum which, considering the contracted finances of these lovely and amiable Ladies, is perhaps not less creditable than the princely donation of 45,000*l.* from Mr. Peel, of Manchester, and his two sons.

The Subscription at the Royal Exchange yesterday exceeded one hundred thousand pounds, and that at the Bank nearly amounted to 800,000*l.* The Ladies' Contribution has experienced proportionate increase.

The Cambridge Subscription already amounts to 3880*l.*

At Bath, a few hours after the books were opened 3275*l.* 5*s.* were subscribed; considerable addition has since been made to that sum.

Amongst the many gratifying instances of public spirit at the present period, the following should not pass unnoticed:—The little parish of Ripple, in Kent, has volunteered their services, and engaged gratuitously to furnish our defenders with 400 score of salted pork, should such supply be wanted.

Leicester and Northampton Corporations 500 guineas; the young gentlemen of Rugby School 50 guineas, the masters, &c. 133*l.* more; Huckleby 600*l.*

A Subscription has been instituted in the Post-office, in aid of the Voluntary Contributions. The produce, it is expected, will exceed two thousand pounds. Each person possessing a salary of 700*l.* per annum gives a fourteenth, those of 400*l.* a 20th, 300*l.* a 25th, of 200*l.* a 30th, and all beneath that sum an hundredth part. The Country Postmasters have, considering their means, contributed liberally.

#### NATIONAL FUND SUBSCRIPTIONS, 1797. See next page.

ever, that social revolutions, even the quickest, take many years, and that the speed varied greatly in different parts of the country and in different industries.

Let us first see what the change looked like from the standpoint of the cultured Englishman of the day. Looking back some fifty years from 1830 he seemed to see the triumph of humanity over matter, a marvellous increase in the power of mankind to surround itself with that material wealth that is the



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# THE OBSERVER

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## ORIGINALS.

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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11.

The Subscription of the Merchants, &c. of the City, which on Friday night amounted to 20,000*l.* yesterday received an addition of 15,000*l.*

The Subscription at the Bank yesterday experienced an augmentation of 20,000*l.* The Duke of Portland directed that his name might be inserted in the patriotic list for the sum of 5,000*l.* per annum during the war; and Earl Camden notified his intent to contribute the sum of 7,000*l.*

The Officers of the brigade of Foot Guards, exclusive of their subscription of a day's pay, contribute one thousand guineas in aid of the public service.

The receipts of the play on Friday at Covent Garden in aid of the voluntary contributions, exceeded 500*l.* The performers, highly to their credit, have instituted a subscription in the company. Messrs. Lewis, Holman, Quick, and others have subscribed 10*l.* each.

The Corporation of Wigan have abolished all public entertainments for the term of three years. The saving, in addition to 100*l.* which they have subscribed, to be given in aid of the voluntary contributions.

The Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh, have subscribed 2,000*l.* to the Voluntary Contributions; half to be paid on the 1st of next month, the remainder on the 1st of March, 1799.

The Duke of Buccleugh has expressed his intention to subscribe the sum of 6000*l.* including what was to be paid by his Grace of taxes imposed by the late triple assessed tax-bill.

The Hon. Thomas Elder has subscribed 200*l.*

The Corporation of Perth has added 500*l.* to this patriotic fund. The first battalion of Perthshire Volunteers have given 500 guineas; and the Perthshire Light Dragoons twelve days' pay, amounting to 381*l.*

The Breadalbane Fencibles have subscribed *one day's pay every month during the continuance of the war*, amounting to about 500*l.* per annum.

—Parochial Meetings have, during the last week, been held generally throughout Kent on the subject of the threatened Invasion, and the people were every where unanimous in testifying their readiness to arm in the event of emergency, and going wherever their services might be required.

At Bath a Meeting is convened to subscribe to the patriotic contributions now carrying on throughout the kingdom.

The Corporation of Saffron Walden have resolved to suspend *all* public entertainments during the War, and to apply the money so saved to the service of the State.

NATIONAL FUND SUBSCRIPTIONS, February 1798. The newspaper cuttings on this and the facing page illustrate the wealth of the landowners and manufacturers

basis of civilization. The productive power of the human unit had grown tenfold, riches seemed to be pouring forth in a never slackening stream, with endless supplies of clothes, furniture, ornament, of everything that differentiates the outward life of civilized man from that of the savage. A nation which had quadrupled her foreign trade in less than a century must surely be on the high road of prosperity. Workers born in hovels found themselves in middle age the possessors of wealth almost beyond dreams. With the new system all the world had become our market, the trade of Eastern kings our daily commonplace. 'Nowhere does man exercise such dominion over matter,' said Macaulay, voicing the thought of thousands. But the millions of whom Macaulay knew nothing, the men and women and children who directly exercised that dominion, had other thoughts. To them the dominion hardly seemed to be theirs; to themselves they seemed the slaves and not the masters of the machine. For beyond and above all the long hours and low wages of which we shall speak presently the worker hated the constriction of the new life. Long hours he had known, poor wages, overworked children, and wretched premises, but within limits he had been his own master. Economic forces might urge him to work fourteen hours a day at his loom, but he could, if he would, stop and smoke a pipe. He could and did take a day off for work in his garden; even his days of unemployment could be thus made fruitful. His wife and children worked beside him, and hard though it was for all, it had a human value. The new order tied him to a machine. His hours were perhaps no longer, but they were not under his control—a bell summoned him to work, and while the wheels revolved he dared not rest. Day in, day out, his life was ordered for him; always he worked under another, liable for the smallest breach of a discipline to fines imposed by a great impersonal system. A list of nineteen fines ranging from 6d. to 6s. for offences varying from whistling or opening a window to failing to provide a substitute when sick, appeared in a mill at Tyldesley. The unfortunate man was forbidden to be found dirty at his work and equally forbidden

to wash himself—the fine being 1s. in either case. Working in a temperature of 80° F., he might not even send out for water to drink.

‘No economist of the day, in estimating the gains and losses of factory employment, ever allowed for the strain and violence that a man suffered in his feelings when he passed from a life in which he could smoke or eat or dig or sleep as he pleased, to one in which somebody turned a key on him, and for 14 hours he had not even the right to whistle.’<sup>1</sup>

Machinery, too, though in a way it lightened man’s labour by letting one man produce the work of two or more, had added a strain to work that aged men faster than physical labour of the hardest. It is not surprising that men and women starved at the hand-loom rather than enter the factories.

The hours worked in the early factories were atrocious; in 1825 in and near Manchester the normal day varied from 12½ to 14 hours, sometimes mills worked night and day. In 1824 the workers successfully resisted an attempt at Macclesfield to raise the hours from 12 to 13, including the dinner hour. There were children working in the mills under five years of age, and the men bluntly told the masters ‘they had made cripples enough already in Macclesfield’. Eight years earlier they had been worse; to a normal day of 14 hours exclusive of two half-hours for meals, overtime of one or two hours a day was sometimes added for three weeks on end. Sundays were spent from 6 a.m. to noon cleaning the machinery, and the workers in these mills were children. In Leeds woollen-mills in 1830 the hours were 15, less two off for meals; in the mines the hours varied from 8 to 12 in Lancashire and 13 to 18 in Derbyshire.

The wages paid varied greatly, but it is a fair estimate that at least half were below subsistence level; during the years of high prices due to the war they must almost all have been so.

It was not, however, the factory worker who suffered most. Men spinners in factories seem to have made a wage on which it was possible to live, though the employers estimated it at 30s.

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Town Labourer*, p. 21.

or more, the men at less than 20s. Spinners in Leeds in 1819 struck for six months to prevent a reduction of 5s. in the pound on a wage ranging from 20s. to 25s.; they were not successful. As we have seen, machinery only indirectly affected the weaver before 1830, since not till then did the power-loom become general. Actually the low level to which the weavers' wages sank helped to delay the introduction of the power-loom, since the saving in cost over hand-work so ill-paid was very small.

From 1788 to the close of the century the hand-weaver experienced a wave of prosperity; the mules and water-frames were turning out yarn in what seemed miraculous quantity, and the weavers were in great request. These short twelve years have been called 'the golden age of this great trade'. But hand-weaving was easy to learn; even in 1799 the influx of workers is seen bringing down wages, and by 1816 they were as low as 7s. a week. In 1818 the men struck vainly for 9s. Silk-weavers of the Midlands were as low as 6s. Weavers were, in fact, in a hopeless economic position; they were trying to maintain a hand industry in competition with a machine one. But the miners were not much better off, though on their efforts rested the whole industrial fabric. Estimates of their wages range from 7s. a week to 16s. or more, according as they are given by miner or master, but in the big miners' strike of 1831 the coal-owners in the same breath asserted that the miners made more than the minimum 33s. a fortnight they asked, and that if it was granted they, the mine-owners, would have to dismiss a quarter of the workers. These, however, were the Northumberland mining aristocracy; in South Staffordshire the men made 8s. 7½d. a week, and lead miners worked normally for 7s. or 8s. It must also be remembered that during much of this time food was at famine price. Some of the distress, inevitable under such sweating, was relieved by the same pernicious system of subsidizing wages from the poor-relief funds, as had been adopted in the rural areas.<sup>1</sup> By 1818 it had taken firm hold of the cotton area. It is obvious that no share of the new wealth of the nation was going to the men whose hands

<sup>1</sup> See p. 328.

### CORRECT STATEMENTS,

*Showing the Wages, Deductions, and net or clear amount of a Weaver's weekly labour.*

Statement First.—For 6-4ths Cambrics, 60 Reeds.

Suppose a man weaves a Warp of this description, in five weeks, and receives from the master 8s. per cut, this will amount to one pound twelve shillings.

<i>s. d.</i>		<i>s. d.</i>	
His weekly receipt		His weekly expences	
will be for weaving		will be	
one fifth of		Rent, (if paid) ...	1 9
the Warp .....	6 4½	Fire .....	1 0
		Sizing Warp.....	0 3
		Looming do.....	0 3
		Size or Sown for do	0 3
		Soft Soap, Tallow	
		and Oil.....	0 2
		Candles.....	0 4
		Soap for family	
		washing .....	0 4
			4 4

This leaves him 2s. 0½d. to support himself, wife, and children during seven days!

Statement second.—For a journeyman weaving the same kind of work:—

<i>s. d.</i>		<i>s. d.</i>	
His weekly receipt		His weekly deductions are for loom	
as above. is.....	6 4½	room, &c. one-fourth, or.....	1 7
		Sizing warp.....	0 3
		Looming do. ....	0 3
		Candles ..	0 4
		Lodging, cooking,	
		and washing.....	1 6
			3 11

This leaves him 2s. 6½d per week, for meat, drink, and clothing!

Statement third.—For 4ths cambrics, 44 reeds.—Suppose an aged man weave a cut per week of this description, and his wife wind his picking:—

<i>s. d.</i>		<i>Weekly deduction, &amp;c.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
Their weekly receipts for weaving and winding	4 0	Rent .....	1 9
		Fire .....	0 10
		Sizing warp.....	0 3
		Looming do. ....	0 3
		Size, or sown for do. ...	0 3
		Candles .....	0 4
		Soft soap, tallow, and oil.....	0 2
		Ditto for family washing .....	0 2
			4 0

'By 1816 wages were as low as 7s. a week.'  
Cutting from *The Liverpool Mercury* of Dec. 27, 1816

produced it. The collective wealth of the nation increased at a rate that struck the upper classes dumb with admiration, but left the poor worse off than ever before. All the increase went to the men who provided either the money or the brains or both; the manual labourer ceased to be a human unit, and became raw material to be bought like cotton or wool in the cheapest market.

The question naturally arises, Whence came these thousands of sweated workers? There were four main sources of supply:

(a) The most striking fact about the period was the sudden great increase of population. In seventy years the population of England nearly doubled, and it flocked to the new industrial areas, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Staffordshire, and Warwick. The causes were exactly the same in the industrial as in the rural areas. Children became an asset, a man's maximum earning age was early, and he had nothing to look forward to or to induce him to postpone marriage. The standard of life was greatly lowered for the manual worker, and that always tends to increase population. The poor-law system added its quota of inducement in the towns as in the villages.

(b) The new industrial areas had not only their own increased numbers to deal with, for the surplus population of the countryside that could find no livelihood in their native villages poured into the new town districts and gave the masters an unending stream of labour. It was this that enabled them to grind down wages to a level that meant slow starvation.

(c) Another tributary was supplied by the condition of Ireland. She had suffered with England during the Napoleonic wars, and was not able to benefit by the new markets secured by England's naval supremacy. The Union tied her helpless to the English industrial policy which was rapidly being shaped in the interests of the manufacturing industry, and, thanks to England's past jealousy, Ireland had no thriving industries except linen, which was not in demand by foreign countries. The Union also increased the number of absentee landlords and thereby the poverty of the workers. So Irish immigrants helped to pull down the

standard of life of the English weaver. In 1826 there were said to be 30,000 in Manchester alone.

(d) Lastly, in 1815 came the disbanding of large armies, which had to be absorbed among the workers.

Such was the effect of the great change on the men manual workers ; what of the women ? They, too, were swept into the factories. Their old occupations were gone : the cottager's wife



CHILDREN IN A ROPE FACTORY

had lost her acre or so of land, her cow, her poultry, and her pig ; the spinster no longer spun, machines worked by men or tended by children spun miles of yarn where she had spun yards ; her husband's wages could not keep her, so she followed to the factory. And women's work, unprotected by law or organization, became a lever as usual to drag down the men's rates. Their best wage seems to have been about 8s. a week, and we read of it as low as 2s. 6d. The early power-loom weavers were women. In many districts women and children could get work in the factories when their men could not. Women worked in the mines throughout this period.

The crowning scandal of the industrial revolution was the use made of children. We have seen already that childhood had been for many centuries a hard school ; long hours, continuous labour, often probably beyond its strength, was its usual

lot. Children of four or five were expected to contribute to their keep by helping in the home industries or on the land. But their lot was mitigated by the consideration that most parents have for their own, and at least their work was subsidiary to that of adults. The regular employment of crowds of children dates from the time of Arkwright's spinning machinery. This required water-power to drive it; it was necessary to build mills by the side of streams, often in places far from towns or even villages. At the same time the machinery required little skill to work, and the new adventurers looked round for children. A brilliant idea came to them, and they procured pauper apprentices from London. The administration of the Poor Law had sunk to a degraded depth; not many pauper babies outlived their first year, and the overseers' main object was to get rid of those who did, at least expense to the rates and trouble to themselves. It was an attractive scheme to ship off a hundred or so of these unwanted ones where no one need bother further how they lived or died. The manufacturer undertook to feed and clothe his 'apprentices', and one was even willing to take one idiot in every twenty to secure his slaves. They were bound from the age of seven upwards till they were twenty-one, and lived, when not in the mill, in prentice houses built close to it. A model mill near Manchester worked its children seventy-four hours a week, the majority fifteen hours a day. Many mills worked day and night, and the day children occupied the beds from which the night ones had just risen. This method had the merit of shortening the hours, though night-work must have seriously injured many of the workers.

'A vivid picture of life in these prentice mills was given before the 1816 committee by a certain Mr. John Moss, governor of the workhouse at Preston. For a year, from February 1814 to March 1815, he had been master of about 150 parish apprentices at a cotton mill at Backbarrow in Lancashire. Most of these children came from London, a few from Liverpool. The London children came at ages ranging from 7 to 11, the Liverpool children came from 8 to 15; all were bound till they were 21. Their regular working hours, Saturdays included, were from 5 a.m.



till 8 p.m., and, with the exception of half an hour at 7 a.m. for breakfast, and half an hour for dinner, they were working continuously the whole time. They were, however, allowed to eat something whilst working in the afternoon. There were no seats in the mill. When lost time had to be made up, the hours were from 5 a.m. till 9 or 10 p.m., and this sometimes lasted for three weeks on end. There were two mills, and if the water was insufficient for both, one was worked with day and night shifts. On Sundays, always some, and sometimes all, were employed from 6 a.m. till noon cleaning machinery. Those who were not so employed were supposed to go to church, three miles away. It is not surprising to read that church-going was unpopular, and that the children would absent themselves under pretence of being wanted at the mill. At night Mr. Moss regularly inspected their beds "because there were always some of them missing, some sometimes might be run away, others sometimes I have found have been asleep in the mill". The children often lay down on the mill floor and went to sleep before their supper. The bedding was simple and unclean; a blanket to lie on and another blanket, with a horse cover to throw over them. During his time sheets were introduced. Nobody from London ever came to look after the children, who, according to Mr. Moss, developed into depraved characters. Once, before Mr. Moss's time, when the mill had stopped payment under its former proprietors, the children were taken from the mill in a cart and turned adrift near the sands on the Lancaster road.<sup>1</sup>

An epidemic of putrid fever at Radcliffe in 1784 drew public attention to this scandal, and some magistrates, headed by those of Manchester, refused to sanction indentures of parish apprentices to cotton mills. But the supply from London and elsewhere did not cease. The 1802 Act of Sir Robert Peel, which will be given in detail later,<sup>2</sup> was good in intention, but it was quite without effect. At last in 1816 an Act was passed limiting the distance within which pauper children could be apprenticed to forty miles. Lancashire had to look elsewhere for its child-labour.

Meanwhile, steam-power was taking the mills away from the streams to the towns, and as the wages of adults sank and war-prices rose, the factory operatives were forced to let their children

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Town Labourer*, pp. 146-7.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 372.

go to work. The hand-weavers, in particular, found that they could not do without their children's labour, and parish relief was even refused to those who had children over six who could go to the mill. Many went at five and even four. These babies were employed to creep under the machines to collect the cotton waste. The children's hours were the same as those of adults, fourteen hours a day, only they did not get the dinner hour three or four days a week, because they were needed to clean the machines, eating their food in the dust and flue of the work-rooms. Most of the children were piecers, i. e. they pieced together the broken threads. Fielden, a humane employer, who worked hard to better things, found by actual measurement that a child in the twelve hours walked twenty miles—no seats were allowed.

Such was the normal life of the mill child, but in times of stress work went on much longer. From 3 a.m. to 10 p.m. was possible, and one mill at least worked from 3.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. all the summer. It is even recorded of one employer that his mill worked for two months on end from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m., and twice a week all through the night as well. It is obvious that children could only be forced to such work by cruelty. Even then it is difficult to understand how they held out. Sometimes they didn't, and dozing, fell into the machine; happy were those who did not wake again. West Indian slave-owners were shocked at what they saw in English mills. It was asserted that the parents were as much to blame as the employers, and no doubt many were brutal and callous; there was little in their lives to make them otherwise. But there were others who carried the children to the mill with breaking hearts, knowing it to be the only alternative to starvation. We reach the end of our period before any effective protection was given to the factory child.

In the mines matters were worse. Boys were employed in all mines, girls in many districts. Their chief business was as trappers or fillers. As trappers they had to shut and open the doors on which the ventilation and safety of the whole mine

THE CONDITION  
OF  
THE WEST INDIA SLAVE  
CONTRASTED WITH THAT OF  
THE INFANT SLAVE

*In our English Factories.*

WITH FIFTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE GRAVER OF  
**ROBERT CRUIKSHANK.**

“Truth is strange,—stranger than Fiction.”



NEGRO SLAVERY.

ENGLISH LIBERTY

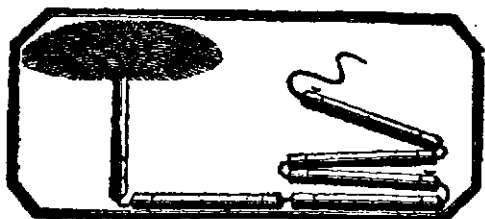
LONDON:  
W. KIDD, 14, CHANDOS STREET, WEST-STRAND;  
AND  
SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL, STATIONERS'-HALL-COURT.

*West Indian slave-owners were shocked at what they saw in English mills'*

depended. This responsible work was done by children from five to eight years of age, sitting twelve hours in the dark. In the Report of the Commission on Children's Employment in 1842, a girl is quoted thus: 'I'm a trapper in the Gamber Pit. I have to trap without a light and I'm scared. I go at four and sometimes half-past three in the morning and come out at five and half-past. I never go to sleep. Sometimes I sing when I've light, but not in the dark. I dare not sing then.'<sup>1</sup> William Richards of South Wales, aged 7½, also gave evidence: 'I been down almost three years. When I first went down I couldn't keep my eyes open; I don't fall asleep now; I smokes my pipe; smokes half a quartern a week.' The same Commission describes the lot of the fillers. These boys and girls filled the trucks with the coal the men had hewn and pushed them along to the foot of the shaft. In some mines they were harnessed to the truck and drew it. They were joined to the truck by a girdle with a chain that passed between their legs, and so they crawled, dragging the truck. We are told that not many under six or seven years of age were employed in this particular way. Some of the passages were only 18 inches high. These were the conditions in 1842; they had been worse earlier. Then the hours had been seventeen to eighteen.

The story of the chimney-sweeps has often been told, perhaps because the callousness that sacrificed the lives and happiness of children to the aesthetic taste of a few rich men strikes us more than that which was excused on the ground of England's commercial supremacy. The boy sweeps were apprenticed young, at four or five years old, and were usually paupers or children people wanted to get rid of. They were forced up the dark suffocating windings by the still greater fear of cruelty, some masters even lighting a fire behind them! Their elbows and knees broke into sores, and it was months before the flesh got hard and callous. They lived in soot, slept on bags of soot, and were very lucky if they were washed once a week—many were never washed at all. Always there was danger of falling and

<sup>1</sup> Children's Employment Commission, *First Report—Mines*, 1842, p. 71.



**FREDERICK LEITH,**

Apprentice and Foreman for the last Thirteen Years, and

**WILLIAM SAUNDERS,**

Successors to MARY LATIMORE,

**Chimney Sweepers & Nightmen,**

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F. L. & W. S. respectfully inform their Friends and the Public in general that they execute the above Business in all its Branches, in the best manner, Extinguish Chimnies when on fire, with care and safety—Clean all sorts of Smoke Jacks, and Smokey Coppers; clean cloths kept for the Upper Apartments, and small boys for Register Stoves.

*Chimnies Swept with a Machine if Required.*

Those Ladies and Gentlemen who may honor them with their Orders, may rest assured of the same being performed with the utmost care and diligence (as they attend to it themselves), and their favours gratefully acknowledged by their obedient servants,

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*Chimneys and Drains emptied and cleaned.—Night work done on the shortest Notice.*

Please not to employ any boys that call at your Houses for Orders, nor any that may solicit you in the above Street, (in our names), but direct your commands to our House, as above, and they will be attended to.

*Established upwards of 60 Years.*

MEMBER of the United Society of Master Chimney Sweepers, for ameliorating and bettering the Condition of their Climbing Boys.



Barington & Gunn, Printers, Green Street, Theobalds Road.

A SWEEP'S business card

being suffocated in the pile of soot that they had swept past them to the bend. Often they were sent up to extinguish a chimney-fire. Many of them became deformed. In the teeth of facts like these it took forty-six years of agitation before even the first Act to stop the horror was passed; though there were machines which could take the children's place in all but a few chimneys in rich men's houses.

It is to be noted that the greatest misery was in the mills of men who had been workers themselves. The new system gave openings to men of the aggressive, enterprising kind, and 'any one who could borrow a little money and was prepared to work like a slave and to live like a slave-master', could force his way to wealth and power. Having no reserve of capital, no tradition of responsibility, assigning his success to his own superior character rather than to the chance of circumstance, he believed entirely in the right of the strongest to force others to contribute to his wealth. Only by sweating could he overcome his lack of capital, and his mental attitude was that of the fighter, he neither asked nor gave quarter. He as little belonged to a civilized era as the robber baron of the Middle Ages.

**Early Factory Legislation.** The factory legislation of this period dealt solely with children, and in its early stages was really an extension of the Poor Law. The whole blame for the terrible conditions of the child worker of the period must not be put on the new system of industry. Throughout the eighteenth century the administration of the Poor Law had been both lax and brutal. Pauper children in particular were regarded as public nuisances, to be disposed of as quickly as possible as long as they were got off the rates. Their fate in the early factories was only a little worse than when they worked singly for careless or brutal masters in farm or cottage. It made their fate more certain, their drudgery more rigid, and lessened their chances of finding favour with a kindly master, and it shut them up in what was practically a prison. The change for the worse was on the spiritual rather than the material side.

The first Act was due largely to the work of Dr. Percival of

Manchester. In 1784 an infectious fever broke out in the Radcliffe cotton works, and he was asked by the magistrates to investigate. His report was such that Manchester magistrates refused to apprentice pauper children to factories. Other fevers broke out, and in 1795 Dr. Percival recommended legislation

*Brutal Assault.—Chimney Sweeping.*—The trial of *William Moles* lately took place at *Hicks's hall*. Our readers will recollect that the prisoner was a master sweeper, and lately stood his trial at the *Old Bailey*, on charge of murder, of having, by brutal treatment, caused the death of *John Hewlings*, a child of five or six years of age, his apprentice. He was, however, acquitted of this charge, but retained on an indictment for an assault on the same child.

After the court had summed up the evidence, the jury instantaneously returned a verdict of *guilty*. The court, after severely animadverting on the atrocity of the prisoner's guilt, sentenced him to *two years' imprisonment*.

On Tuesday the 15th inst. a master chimney-sweeper was brought before the magistrates, charged with the ill treatment of one of his boys, a child of little more than five years of age. It appeared, that on the morning of that day, the child had remained more than two hours in a chimney, rather than encounter the severity of his master's anger. The offender was ordered to find bail for his appearance to answer any indictment which might be preferred against him; this however he has not yet been able to do, and therefore remains in prison. We hope it will be a warning to similar unfeeling characters.

From *The Liverpool Mercury*, July 19, 1816, and  
May 23, 1817.

and control. Abuses were not confined to factories, apprentices were liable to all kinds of ill-treatment, and the carelessness of the Poor Law overseers almost passes belief. In 1802 Sir Robert Peel, who had himself employed children, with a rare courage brought in and carried the first Factory Act in the guise of the

HEALTH AND MORALS OF APPRENTICES ACT.<sup>1</sup> Its chief clauses were:

1. Apprentices not to work more than twelve hours a day, and not at night after 1804.
2. Measures were to be taken to educate apprentices.
3. Boys and girls to sleep apart, and not more than two in a bed.
4. Apprentices to attend church once a month.
5. *All* factories, whether with apprentices or not, to be white-washed once a year, and to be properly ventilated.
6. A copy of this Act to be hung up in every cotton mill.

Though justices were empowered to inflict fines of £2 to £5 for breaches of these regulations, the Act was utterly ineffective for want of machinery to enforce it. Some magistrates tried to make it effective, and at least helped to educate public opinion. The introduction of steam made pauper apprentices less important,<sup>2</sup> and 'free' children took their place. The next Act was the work of Robert Owen. Experiments in his own mills had convinced him that exploiting child-labour was not only brutal but also uneconomic. By continual agitation he obtained from Sir Robert Peel a commission to inquire, *and after two years' investigation* this body decided that fourteen or fifteen hours a day in overheated rooms *was* detrimental to children. In 1819 Owen obtained an ACT, watered down from his original draft but still something. By this no child under nine could be employed, and those under sixteen were limited to twelve hours a day, exclusive of meal-times. But the Act referred only to cotton mills, and left the inspection to the justices as before. The chief value of the Act was its admission that children needed protection. In 1825 and 1831 amending Acts were passed, attempting somewhat feebly to enforce that of 1819, which was almost universally ignored. Manufacturers and their relatives were not to act as justices in cases under the Act. That of 1831 raised the age of the twelve-hour limit to eighteen, and of night-work to twenty-one.

<sup>1</sup> The Act applied to cotton and woollen factories only.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 365.



In 1830 RICHARD OASTLER had begun his letters in the *Leeds Mercury* on 'Yorkshire Slavery'. In 1831-2 MICHAEL SADLER introduced his TEN HOURS BILL. This was shelved to a Select Committee, and Sadler wore himself out in his effort to bring evidence from all parts of the kingdom. He lost his seat in the General Election of 1832, and his place on the committee was taken by Lord Ashley (afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury). In spite of a second attempt to get rid of the matter by appointing a special commission to investigate on the spot, the FACTORY ACT OF 1833 was passed, and was the first effective piece of that legislative control of industry which has been growing mightily for nearly a century. Its effectiveness was due to a suggestion of the better manufacturers, viz. that paid officials should be appointed to see it carried out. Its chief clauses were :

1. No night-work by workers under eighteen in cotton, wool, linen, or silk mills, except in lace-making.
2. Twelve hours a day and sixty-nine a week to be the limit for workers under eighteen.
3. No child under nine to be employed in silk mills.
4. After 1834 no child under 13 to be employed for more than forty-eight hours a week or nine a day.
5. One and a half hours to be allowed for meals, and children not to remain in the mill during meal time.
6. Four Government inspectors to be appointed, with power to enter the mills.
7. The penalties were fines of £1-£20, and the inspectors were given powers co-ordinate with those of the Justices of the Peace.

It had taken over twenty-five years to secure for the children a sixty-nine hour working week.

No serious attempt was made during the period to limit the hours of adult labour, though the beginnings of a ten-hour movement for *all* workers are to be found as early as 1825.

The names of some of the pioneer workers on behalf of children should be remembered ; besides Sadler, Lord Ashley, Robert Owen, and Richard Oastler, and to some extent Peel, there were men such as G. S. Bull and J. R. Stephens, enlightened clergy

of the time, Fielden an employer, John Doherty, George Condy, and Philip Grant.

**Beginnings of Trade Unionism.** It is time to ask what defence the worker had against the crushing pressure of the new system. The most obvious, and the most difficult to achieve, was com-

## THE CURSE OF THE FACTORY SYSTEM;

OR,

A short Account of the origin of Factory Cruelties, of the attempts to protect the Children by Law; of their present Sufferings; our duty towards them; Injustice of Mr. Thomson's Bill; the Folly of the Political Economists; a Warning against sending the Children of the South into the Factories of the North.

"What he was disposed to recommend was, a regulation that no children should be so employed under the age of ten years, and that the duration of their labour should be limited to twelve hours and a half per diem, including the time for education and meals, which would leave ten hours for laborious employment."—The late Sir ROBERT PEEL's speech on introducing the Factory Bill in 1815.—*Debates.*

"Such indiscriminate and unlimited employment of the poor, consisting of a great proportion of the inhabitants of trading districts, will be attended with effects to the rising generation so serious and alarming, that I cannot contemplate them without dismay; and thus that great effort of British ingenuity, whereby the machinery of our manufactures has been brought to such perfection, instead of being a blessing to the nation, will be converted into its bitterest curse."—The late Sir ROBERT PEEL, in his Evidence before the House of Commons Committee in 1816, p. 133.

By JOHN FIELDEN, M.P. for Oldham.

And Manufacturer at Todmorden, in Lancashire.

HALIFAX;

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*'The names of some . . . should be remembered . . .  
Fielden an employer.'*

bination, the only real resource of the weak in a battle with the strong. Workers' combinations are now called Trade Unions, but the name came later than the thing. If we accept the definition of the historians of Trade Unionism, Mr. and Mrs. Webb, we find it first in existence about 1700, but it was the new system after 1780 that spread the movement all over the country.

'A Trade Union, as we understand the term, is a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives.'<sup>1</sup> A Trade Union was apt to arise whenever groups of wage-earners met, whether for pleasure or business. Sometimes a meeting for a social evening, sometimes a sudden strike, gave rise to a more or less permanent organization. In some trades public-houses were used as places where vacant jobs could be heard of, and these 'houses of call' gave the necessary opportunity. One of the earliest of such continuous associations is that of our old friends the hatters or felt-makers. We found them in 1604 triumphantly extricating themselves from the tyranny of the merchant haberdashers. But it did not take long for these small masters to turn themselves into capitalists, and in 1667 we find the journeymen combining to petition the aldermen against the Court of the Company. The Court of aldermen decided that they could not have combinations of workmen dictating wages, and a wage-list was drawn up jointly by both disputant parties and confirmed by the aldermen. Over the list were many disputes, and the journeymen were on the whole successful in maintaining their standard; we find them about 1771 organizing the trade throughout the country.

The capitalist wool industry of the West of England gives examples of combinations of wage-earners all through the eighteenth century. These early associations, however, consisted of skilled workers, intent, like the mediaeval guildsmen, on keeping their craft a properly paid monopoly. The unskilled labourer was rather their enemy than otherwise, since to admit him to the craft was to lower their own wage and status. With the coming of machinery things altered. At first the craftsman tried to put into effect the laws that protected him from exploitation; he failed, and during the fight found his standard beaten down to the level of the unskilled. Obviously, he would have to join with these to resist the greed of the new masters, and

<sup>1</sup> *The History of Trade Unionism*, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, p. 1, 1920 edition.

factory life made this easier. A hundred men meeting daily in one place to work could keep in touch better than hand-workers in their homes. Moreover, the gulf was deepening between masters and men, all control was passing to the former, the workmen of all kinds were becoming 'hands'. It is from this moment that modern Trade Unionism springs.

The difficulties facing these early Unions were great.

(a) The masters were acting in two ways that affected their members adversely; they were using unlimited numbers of apprentices and they were constantly lowering piecework rates. In both matters the early Unions turned to the law to protect them. Up to 1756 such appeals for the magistrates to fix wages or to compel the masters to limit apprentices had usually been effective. But suddenly the 'House of Commons exchanged its policy of mediaeval protection for one of "Administrative Nihilism".'<sup>1</sup> From 1757 Parliament refused to regulate industry, and in 1777 removed the limitation of apprentices in the feltmakers' industry. It was obvious that the employer had the ear of the Government, and indeed there was no getting away from the fact that the new processes did *not* require a seven years' apprenticeship. The workers had a grievance, a very real one; their standard of life was being lowered badly, but they mistook at first the remedy. Something they thought might be done with the old unrepealed laws, and they tried to set them in motion. The bias of the courts in favour of the new masters made this effort fruitless. An appeal to Parliament to enforce the laws with regard to fixing wages resulted in their total repeal in 1813, and next year the Elizabethan Statute of Apprentices went too.

(b) It must not be thought that there were no humane or far-seeing men among the employers who would gladly have raised the conditions of their workers, but they were tied by the actions of the others. In a competitive system the price is set by the lowest rate, and the master who underpaid his workers to starvation point and worked his machinery sixteen hours or more

<sup>1</sup> Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 51.

a day could undersell those who would have liked to use humaner methods. With Parliament determined not to interfere to coerce the bad ones the good ones were helpless.

(c) One of the most striking features of the story of these years is the bad faith of many of the employers. When force failed, as it sometimes did, they resorted to treachery. There are many instances that could be quoted. In 1815 the seamen of the north-east coast struck against the persistent undermanning of ships. The men had public opinion behind them, but the shipowners admitted in the presence of a Home Office representative that if they had to make concessions they would only keep them till public wrath had blown over. The strike was eventually put down by the military, and, though the shipowners had undertaken to send crews of a certain size, a Sunderland firm did not hesitate to embark the required number in eight of their ships, put out to sea, and then re-land the extra men. In 1810 the miners had agreed to forgo their claim for a minimum nine days' work a fortnight if the mine was unfit for working owing to accident or any other cause. After three days idle they were to receive 2s. 6d. a day. The owners in slack times adopted the plan of working one day and closing down three! Sheridan had secured a clause in the Act of 1800 to allow arbitration in wage disputes. Masters and men had to appoint two arbitrators, but the Act did not compel the arbitrators to act, and when the masters discovered this they appointed some one living far away who did not intend to act.

(d) But the main obstacle to Trade Union development was the Combination Laws. Associations to raise wages were illegal in common law, were offences against the Conspiracy Laws, and also against certain special laws, of which there were said to be forty in existence. The idea behind these laws was that such combinations were rebellion against the order of the State or the municipality which controlled wages. When the State refused any longer to control wages, there was no case left for these laws, but they remained in force and could be put in motion by interested employers. But the growth of combination among

the workers made the masters anxious not to be dependent on the interpretation of old laws even by willing judges, and in 1799 a Act was promoted to put down the strike of millwrights. Pitt, however, introduced a Bill to cover all trades, and in twenty-four days it was rushed through Parliament. Benjamin Hobhouse and Lord Holland opposed it in vain. Next year, 1800, the Bill was modified a little, largely at the instance of Sheridan. The result was that not only were strikes rendered illegal, but for a little group of four or five workmen to ask jointly for a rise of wages was to expose themselves to prosecution and imprisonment. They were even forced, contrary to the custom of English law, to give evidence against themselves. Even when the employers recognized a society the men could be and often were prosecuted. In at least one instance men were imprisoned for two years for meeting at the request of some of the better employers to try to arrange to refuse work for those paying wages below the current rate. To attend any meeting for raising wages or shortening hours or inducing any one else to attend was to be liable, on conviction by any magistrate (who might be the accused's own employer), to three months' imprisonment.

(e) Lastly, the men had to fight rings of employers. The Combination Laws were supposed to apply equally to the masters, but in practice no attempt was made to enforce them in this direction, and the masters openly made agreements against their workers. There is no case on record of a master being punished under the Act.

All these difficulties tended to drive the Unions underground. Many disguised themselves as Friendly Societies or Benefit Clubs, in which workers insured themselves against sickness or unemployment. Not all these were Trade Unions, but it was easy to combine the two objects and conceal the existence of one of them. Many of the employers objected as much to Friendly Societies as to trade combinations for fighting purposes. It is also not surprising that under such conditions the early Unions were often very temporary. A big strike would increase their membership, its failure would cause the disappearance of

the society. Any success they might attain depended largely on the skill and honesty of the leaders, also on their powers of endurance. Considering the illiterate state of the bulk of the nation, the lack of leisure, and the exhausting nature of their toil, the number of fine leaders thrown up in the struggle is surprising. Such men were GRAVENER HENSON, who led the Nottingham framework knitters and was imprisoned for eighteen months without trial during the 1817-18 suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act; the pitman, THOMAS HEPBURN, who won by his skilled leading the great strike of 1831, was defeated by the cholera and the rashness of insubordinate followers in 1832, and was then forced to retire from all public work as a condition of being allowed to earn his living. He lived for another forty years, long enough to see the men for whom he had worked with their feet well set on the path to that state of solidarity which to-day makes the Miners' the most powerful Union in the world. A third and more brilliant representative of the coming order was JOHN DOHERTY. Born in Ireland in 1799, he entered a cotton mill in Larne at the age of ten. In 1816 he went to Manchester and soon became a leader among the men. In 1829 he led the great strike of the Hyde spinners, and its failure after six months forced him to the conclusion that small district Unions could not fight successfully. He organized then first a Union of cotton spinners throughout the United Kingdom, and, though this was not successful for long, Doherty conceived the still bigger project of a 'Trades Union', i. e. a Union of all the trades in the country. This ambitious project roused the middle class and their press to a state of panic, but it was too early yet to enrol the whole working class in one solid phalanx, and the Union petered out. He published two papers, one of which, *The Voice of the People*, sold at 7d. weekly, is said to have had a circulation of 30,000. Eventually he set up in business as a printer and bookseller. He was acute enough to see that the Reform of Parliament in 1832 would do nothing to help the manual worker, and to say openly that no reform was possible till humanity ceased to be subordinated to machinery.

When the workers found that all attempts to get wages fixed

by public enactment failed, they began an agitation for a minimum wage. In 1808 the cotton operatives, backed ostensibly by many of the masters, brought forward a Bill to regulate wages in cotton weaving. From the first it had no chance, and Sir Robert Peel, who had contributed £31 10s. towards the fund for its promotion, opposed its passage in the House. Against the Bill it was argued that abilities were not equal, that many workmen would be dismissed, and that the real trouble was that too high wages had attracted too many to the trade, that, if left alone, wages always found their proper level. This estimate of 6s. a week as too high wages exasperated Lancashire, however reasonable it may have appeared in Westminster; riots followed, and then a strike, which was successful in raising wages for about a month. From that time onwards this demand takes a foremost place in all agitations. It was more than once supported by leading employers.

The masters' chief weapon against the Unions was what was known as 'the presentation of the document', i.e. they tried to make workmen sign an agreement not to belong to any Union. The worst period for the workers was from 1816 to 1829. On the declaration of peace, prices fell and a concerted movement was made by the employers to cut wages; at the same time there came a competition in cutting prices, and wages reached their limit. There followed the agitations of 1818, Peterloo, and the Six Acts, which will be described in a later chapter.<sup>1</sup> Then came the agitation for the repeal of the Combination Acts, which was effected in 1824 and 1825.

The injustice of these Acts had long been patent; they placed the wage-earner entirely at the mercy of the worst of the manufacturers. Cases such as the following were typical. A cotton weaver of Stockport, Joseph Sherwin, gave evidence before the Select Committee, that a master of a weaving factory one winter docked his labourers of 3d. per loom, i.e. 6d. to 9d. a week, for light, on a wage of 8s., forgot to take off the reduction in summer, and as winter returned took off another 3d. per loom. The

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 418, 423.



workers, twelve women and eleven men, left work, were prosecuted, and given a month's imprisonment. Often, of course, the threat of prosecution prevented the workers offering any resistance to a reduction of wages. As long as the Combination Laws were on the Statute Book there was no freedom for the wage-earner.

The story of their repeal is almost a romance. The hero is



*English Factory Slaves. Pl. 3 Their daily employment. —*

Cartoon by Robert Cruikshank.

Francis Place, a master tailor with a successful business at Charing Cross. About 1814 he began a campaign for freedom of combination by collecting innumerable cases of the tyranny of the laws. Later he gained the support of McCulloch, editor of the *Scotsman*, and of Joseph Hume, leader of a section of Radicals. With their help a public opinion in favour of freedom was gradually built up, and in 1823 Hume succeeded in inveigling Huskisson and Peel into setting up a Select Committee, to examine three questions, of which the combinations of workmen was regarded by Peel as a negligible third. With Hume as

chairman and Place pulling wires in the background (he was not even allowed in the room, since, as was pointed out, he was neither a Member of Parliament nor a gentleman), the Committee set about establishing the evidence of the tyranny of the Combination Laws. Evidence was brought by Place from all parts of the country, the witnesses were put up at his house and carefully prepared for the ordeal before them, while Hume was kept supplied with a précis of the proceedings fully analysed, so that the whole mass of the evidence should be available at any moment. Never was a political movement more skilfully manipulated. The result was a series of resolutions in favour of complete freedom, and a Bill repealing the Combination Laws was hustled through both Houses in the last week of the 1824 session. Unfortunately, the workers thought the millenium had arrived, and that the best way to celebrate it was to strike for higher wages. The governing classes suddenly realized that they had been hoodwinked and a strong reaction set in. In 1825 a fresh Committee was appointed, and Hume got no chance of packing it, nor of ordering its procedure. The intention was to repeal the 1824 Act after the minimum of inquiry. But they had reckoned without Place. With his help Hume was able to controvert the exaggerations of the masters, while at the same time, at his instigation, the Trade Union leaders organized an agitation throughout the country. The Act of the previous year was modified, but not repealed, and associations to regulate wages and hours of work were henceforth legal. Trade Unions were still, as we shall see, heavily handicapped, but at least they attained to legitimate existence.

The great burst of Trade Union energy in 1825 was followed by a period of bad trade till 1829. So great was the distress that many factory workers were only kept alive by charity. The masters lowered wages and dismissed employees, and the Unions were far too weak to fight successfully on a falling market. The remaining four years of this period are marked by the attempts to organize the workers in one 'Trades Union', as they called it—what is now known as the 'One Big Union', already

referred to in connexion with John Doherty. The 'National Association for the Protection of Labour', founded in 1830, is said to have reached a membership of 100,000, but by 1832 it had disappeared. Another ambitious attempt was the organization of a Builders' Union to include Unions of all the seven building trades. In 1833 it held a delegate meeting in Manchester lasting six days and attended by 270 delegates representing 30,000 workers. Their hopes were unlimited, the millennium seemed at hand, but the plant had grown too rapidly, and it had few roots. The period 1832-4 covers the most remarkable growth of workers' organization in the whole history of Trade Unions. The cotton operatives agitated for an eight hours' day; the woollen workers were resisting a lock-out by the masters, who were trying to exclude Union men; the Potters' Union in three years had grown to 8,000 members; and in 1834 Owen started 'The Grand National Consolidated Trades Union', which aimed at absorbing all existing Unions. In a few weeks it is said to have admitted half a million members, and a rage for Trades Unionism swept over the country. But lock-outs and strikes followed everywhere, and the funds of the Union were drained by innumerable small battles. The 'Derby turn-out', when 1,500 men were locked out for refusing to give up the Union, lasted four months, and was a complete triumph for the employers. The press worked up public feeling against the Union, and when the London gas stokers struck and Westminster was in partial darkness, middle-class feeling rose to boiling-point. At the same moment the conviction of the six Dorchester labourers for taking an oath fell like a bomb from the sky on the Trade Union world.

To explain this event we must go back a little. All the early combinations of workmen seem to have bound themselves to fidelity by elaborate oaths and gruesome ceremony. The oath is not surprising, since the Combination Laws placed each man's liberty at the mercy of his fellows, but the ritual, which reached its highest elaboration about 1830, seems to us mere childish play. Some of it was traditional from the days of craft guilds,

some borrowed from Freemasonry, some just the effort of illiterate men to be impressive even at the risk of being ridiculous.

' Besides the opening prayer, and religious hymns sung at intervals, these "initiation pacts" consisted of questions and responses by the *dramatis personae* in quaint doggerel and were brought to a close by the new members taking a solemn oath of loyalty and secrecy. Officers clothed in surplices, inner chambers into which the candidates were admitted blindfolded, a skeleton, drawn sword, battle axes and other mystic "properties" enhanced the sensational solemnity of this fantastic performance.'<sup>1</sup>

The extraordinary thing is that the governing classes seem to have taken these ceremonies as seriously as the performers, and regarded them as evidence of a general nihilist conspiracy to break up society. Now there happened to be on the Statute Book some laws which made the taking of secret oaths unlawful, and when the 'Grand National Consolidated Trades Union', which had one of these fantastic ceremonies of initiation, began to spread even to agricultural labourers, it occurred to some one to bring this legal weapon into action. We have seen what was the state of the agricultural labourer, ground down by the farmers and by the operation of the Corn Laws, and demoralized by the Poor Law. The 1830 riots<sup>2</sup> had been brutally punished and the labourers were in a state of sullen despair. To them came the new hope of a new Union and a consequent raising of wages to 10s. But the Dorset farmers repented their agreement, and next year reduced them shilling by shilling to 7s. The labourers turned, and under the inspiration of the 'Grand Consolidated' formed a village club with the full and elaborate ritual. There was no secrecy about it (an open order was given for a figure of Death 6 ft. high!), and at the instance of the farmers six leading members were arrested on the charge of taking illegal oaths. No charge of intimidation or even of striking was made, but after a brief trial the judge sentenced them to transportation for seven years. The Government seized the chance, and hustled

<sup>1</sup> Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 424.

the prisoners out of the country. But the workers and their leaders were not so easily browbeaten. The Grand Consolidated organized a monster demonstration in London and got up a petition signed by a quarter of a million people. The Radical party took up the monstrous injustice, and after two years' agitation the Government gave way and the sentences were remitted, though they managed to keep the men from returning for another two years. But the 'Grand Consolidated' was meanwhile breaking up; a number of vain strikes undermined its power, and the central control was not strong enough to prevent reckless enterprises of the amalgamated lodges; before the end of 1834 the forces were scattered.

'The records of the rise and fall of the "New Unionism" of 1830-4 leave us conscious of a vast enlargement in the ideas of the workers, without any corresponding alteration in their tactics in the field. In council they are idealists, dreaming of a new heaven and a new earth; humanitarians, educationalists, socialists, moralists; in battle they are still the struggling, half-emancipated serfs of 1825, armed only with the rude weapons of the strike and boycott; sometimes feared and hated by the propertied classes; sometimes merely despised; always oppressed and miserably poor.'<sup>1</sup>

**Attacks on Machinery.** There were, however, times when the misery of the worker became so acute that argument and agitation seemed too slow a method to meet the need. Then we get riots and outrages in which ignorant men and women turned fiercely on the hated wheels that naturally seemed the immediate cause of their distress. The earliest machine-breaking riots were against Arkwright's spinning machinery, and in 1779 his mill near Chorley was fired and a loss of £4,400 involved. The elder Peel's works at Altham were also visited and Arkwright's machinery destroyed. Throughout Lancashire were raids on spinning-jennies with more than twenty spindles. On the whole public sympathy, at this date, was with the rioters. In most of the textile industries the expansion of trade for some years absorbed the displaced hand-worker, and little further objection

<sup>1</sup> Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 153-4.

was raised to machinery in itself. In 1802 the cloth finishers of Wiltshire rose against the gig-mills.<sup>1</sup> There was considerable intercourse with the wool workers of Yorkshire, and the riots were the more formidable in that they were led by discharged soldiers

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF THE SOCIETY FOR  
THE DIFFUSION OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

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THE  
WORKING-MAN'S COMPANION.

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THE  
RESULTS OF MACHINERY,  
BARELY,  
CHEAP PRODUCTION  
AND  
INCREASED EMPLOYMENT, EXHIBITED:

BEING  
AN ADDRESS TO THE WORKING-MEN OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM.

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THIRD EDITION.

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whom the Peace of Amiens had thrown back into civilian life to find their places gone. In about a month £8,000 worth of damage was done. There was an Act of the reign of Edward VI which made gig-mills illegal, and the men claimed that they were only enforcing the law. In Yorkshire they were successful in keeping out the machines, but in Wiltshire Thomas Elleker was convicted of arson and executed, and the men entered on a long parliamentary agitation, which definitely failed in 1809.

The years 1812-13 are memorable for the Lud-dite outrages. These originated among the framework knitters of Nottingham, and were not actu-  
ally directed against machinery itself. Some of the baser employers had devised a scheme for adapting old machines to make a false kind of stocking called 'cut ups'. These were flat pieces of knitting, out of which gloves, socks, and stockings were cut and sewn up. Having no proper selvage

<sup>1</sup> See p. 355.

they gave way easily and were useless. But they were not easily distinguished at sight, and so the market became overstocked with worthless goods which dragged down the price of well-made ones. There was much agitation against them, and the better masters agreed not to reduce wages if the men could manage to put down 'cut work'. The men's organization not being strong enough to coerce the masters, the men took to breaking all frames that made spurious articles or belonging to masters who did not pay the current wage. They called themselves Luddites, and their proclamations were signed 'Ned Ludd'. The original Ned Ludd was a boy apprentice who refused to work, and being whipped by the order of the magistrate,



'The Leader of the Luddites' disguised as a woman.  
Cartoon of 1812.

broke up his frame with a hammer. Who was the actual Ned Ludd or King Ludd who led the rioters has never transpired. Grävener Henson, their Union leader, was opposed to violence. Frame-breaking had happened before in the hosiery trade, but this time it was organized and well planned. It was easy to do, since the frames were hired out by the masters and were scattered in cottages. About 1,000 frames altogether were destroyed. For

a time the men were successful, and wages are said to have been raised 2s. a dozen pair. Nine men were tried for their share in the riots, and seven of them transported for seven or fourteen years. But for the humanity of the judge, Mr. Justice Bayley, they would have been tried on the capital charge of burglary. One life was lost in the riots.

The Lancashire and Cheshire riots followed those at Nottingham a few months later, and were directed against the new power-looms. But the Luddite outrages were mixed up with food riots, which were for the most part spontaneous outbursts, and most of the machinery burning seems to have been started by spies, who did not hesitate to create the crimes they afterwards denounced. One or two mills were burnt, wild rumours of a nationwide conspiracy flew around, and the military killed some rioters.

The vengeance of the law fell on thirty-two men and women, eight of whom were hanged—one a boy of sixteen, described as childish for his age—seventeen transported, and seven imprisoned for six months. Besides these, thirty-eight men were tried on a charge of administering an oath to a certain Samuel Fleming, who was a spy and whose evidence was entirely unsupported. These men were helped by the party of reform, were defended by Brougham, and after ten weeks in prison were triumphantly acquitted.

The Yorkshire Luddites have achieved greater notoriety, partly due to Charlotte Brontë's having made their doings the background of her novel *Shirley*. The agitation here was a sequel to the gig-mill dispute of 1802. Since the shearmen refused to shear cloth whose nap had been raised in mills, it was advantageous to the masters to have shearing machinery. This could do the work of four highly skilled men. Now the year 1812 was a bad time to introduce changes. There had been a poor harvest and the Orders in Council<sup>1</sup> were just producing their greatest effect of unemployment. The men began by destroying the frames in small outlying mills, and finding little resistance, grew bolder. It was impossible to guard all the scattered mills with

<sup>1</sup> See p. 394.



## EXECUTION OF LUDDITES, &c.

*Leicester, April 17.*—The most melancholy spectacle ever witnessed at Leicester took place this day, in the execution of the seven men under sentence of death, viz. the six Luddites, for destroying lace machines, and firing with intent to kill, in the factory of Messrs. Heathcote and Boden, at Loughborough, last June; the other for arson, or setting stacks on fire, at Newhold, in the said county.—The names of the Luddites were—Joshua Mitchell, John Crowder, John Amos, William Towle, William Withers and Thomas Savidge; the name of the other Thomas Beavington. As early as six o'clock in the morning they were removed, under military escort, from the jail to the new Bridewell, to be executed on the new drop. On their way, the Luddites very cheerfully sung hymns all the time they passed. Beavington seemed very dejected.—Many thousands of spectators kept assembling until noon, to witness this truly tragic scene, and conducted themselves in the most peaceable manner. About twelve o'clock the unhappy men appeared on the platform, attended by the Rev. Mr. Hayton, chaplain to the jail; the Rev. Mr. Vaughan, the Sheriff, and other officers. Since their condemnation the Luddites had conducted themselves in the most becoming manner, desiring forgiveness of God, and forgiving Blackburn and Burton, (by far the worse characters) who were admitted evidence against them. Beavington, an ignorant man, was insensible of his situation to the last. Savidge thanked the Reverend Ministers for their kindness and attention on their behalf; he said he had intended to say more, but the time was too far gone, hoped the people would take warning by their fate, fear no man, but fear God; and declared their innocence of shooting.—Amos addressed the people:—"Friends and fellow countrymen! You see here six men going to suffer innocently; the man who committed the crime will soon be at large. Take warning by our fate—Farewell." Mitchell said a few words, much similar; and without any apparent agitation they spoke to several friends in the crowd; and threw oranges, &c. to some of them, and desired to be remembered to their Nottingham acquaintances.—When all things were ready for the fatal moment, Amos, with a firm and undaunted voice, said they would now sing a hymn, and desired the people to join them, which was readily complied with by numbers. The hymn he chose, and to which he pitched the tune, was from Dr. Watts.

All the Luddites joined very earnestly in singing the hymn; immediately after which the platform fell, and launched them into eternity.

Beavington declared his innocence to the last, and called God to witness he did not set the stacks on fire.

We lament to say, that the most of these misguided men, in the bloom of life, have left widows, and more than thirty children, to add to the miseries of the present truly calamitous times !!

soldiers, and it was only after months of activity that the men were checked, in an attack on William Cartwright's mill at Ranfolds, of which a somewhat modified account is given in *Shirley*. Cartwright was accused of ill-treating two wounded rioters in order to extort information from them. Whether this is true or not the two died loyal to their fellows, and the minds of the workers turned to vengeance. An unsuccessful attack was made on Cartwright, and ten days later another mill-owner was shot by four men. The temper of the men is shown by the fact that although the murderers were known by at least five others and must have been guessed by many more, the offer of a reward of £2,000 was of no avail. The Government was frightened and the West Riding was flooded with soldiers and spies, magistrates were endowed with special powers, and finally a special commission was set up. The account of the trials that followed is interesting, but cannot be attempted here; many of the accused were convicted on the doubtful evidence of men trying to save their own lives by betraying their associates. Seventeen were executed, three for the murder of Horsfall; many were transported to the colonies. One is glad to learn that the chief traitor was cheated out of the reward of £2,000 promised him.

As to the wide-famed 'Luddite oath', which so scared the Government, a detailed study of all the evidence and of Home Office papers has led Mr. and Mrs. Hammond to the conviction that there is no evidence to show that the oath was widespread, or that it was ever administered except in districts where spies were busy at work.<sup>1</sup>

In 1826 there was very general distress and the cotton weavers were starving. The infinite patience of these oppressed workers was marvellous, if to us not so commendable as to the Vicar of Blackburn, who in April 1826 praised them that 'none of them have transgressed the bounds of propriety, or shown a spirit of insubordination to the laws of their country'. But the worthy vicar somewhat too rashly assumed that their trust in 'Provi-

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer*, p. 339.

dence and God's servants' could not be tried too far, for before the month was out they had destroyed over 1,000 power-looms round Blackburn and Bury. The rioting did not last long; as a result ten wretches were transported, thirty-three others imprisoned.

. **Summary.** 1. A tendency to capitalist organization of industry had become more and more evident throughout the eighteenth century. There were men and money waiting, ready to use the increased facilities for production that machinery could give. Mechanical invention found earliest scope in the cotton and iron industries, because the one was nearly new and the other moribund. In wool and other textiles, old customs and traditions postponed for a generation the complete transfer to production by power and to thorough capitalist organization.

2. The immediate effect of this revolution in industry was an enormous increase of production, which increased the total wealth of the nation at an unprecedented rate and that of individuals to sums undreamt of earlier; at the same time there was a progressive and rapid degradation of the standard of life of the workers, which reached its limit in the years immediately following the peace of 1815.

3. During the whole period humane men were trying to secure the interference of Parliament to prevent the worst abuses of the new system, and after several futile attempts, Parliament produced in 1833 the first Factory Act that had in it a germ of success.

4. Since appeals to the law to protect them failed, the workers turned to combination as their sole defence against the greed of their masters, and the Trade Union movement was born.

Its early history is one of fairly constant and heroic failure. Up to 1832 Government, Parliament, and all the middle and upper classes combined to prevent the manual worker taking measures to oppose the exploitation of his individual labour. For most of the period Trade Unions were illegal societies, carried on secretly or at the risk of heavy punishment to the leaders. During this time the workers learnt by bitter experience

that collective power was not a thing to be won in short bursts of enthusiasm, and that they must learn to walk before they could run. The dreams of Owen and his followers faded, the attempts to organize on a big scale failed, and by 1830 the workers were ready to start the slow, steady process of organic growth from small things to large, out of which the movement of the next fifty years was to evolve slowly and become the second greatest power of the modern world.

5. By the end of the period the four leading industries of England were cotton, wool, iron, and coal, and the two last had become indispensable to the two first. Wool had not quite passed out of the domestic stage, since most wool-weaving was still done with the hand-loom, but the three others were, with very small exceptions, organized for capitalist production.

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### 3. Commerce. Transit. Finance

**The Expansion of Trade.** It is obvious that the first effect of the industrial revolution must be a great increase in our foreign trade. Machinery enabled us to make more goods than were actually needed at home, and our exports to foreign markets increased rapidly. But, since if we sell we must also buy, our imports, especially of raw material for manufacture, rose too. The graph on p. 394 gives the official figures for the imports and exports from 1760 to 1830, based on the customs returns; they are not at all accurate, but the relative rise and fall is sufficiently so to illustrate the general trend. The rise after 1785 is marked, and it greatly surprised the men of the time that the greatest rise of all was in the American trade, just when they thought the loss of the Colonies would cause it to vanish for ever. In 1786 a commercial treaty had been arranged with France, which undid the Methuen Treaty,<sup>1</sup> admitting French wines on the same terms as those of Portugal, and lowering greatly the duties on other imports from France. The old policy of the Navigation Laws still persisted and considerably

See p. 292.

hampered the trade between the United States and the West Indies.

The effect of the outbreak of the war with France in 1793 was an upheaval in the world of commerce, but in spite of a series of financial crises, to be dealt with later, the actual result was a great increase of foreign trade. Napoleon did his

SHIPPING INSURANCES.—The following were the Rates of Insurance at Hamburg and Altona, when our last letters came from thence.

These Rates were on Sept. 30;—and formed to and from the places following.

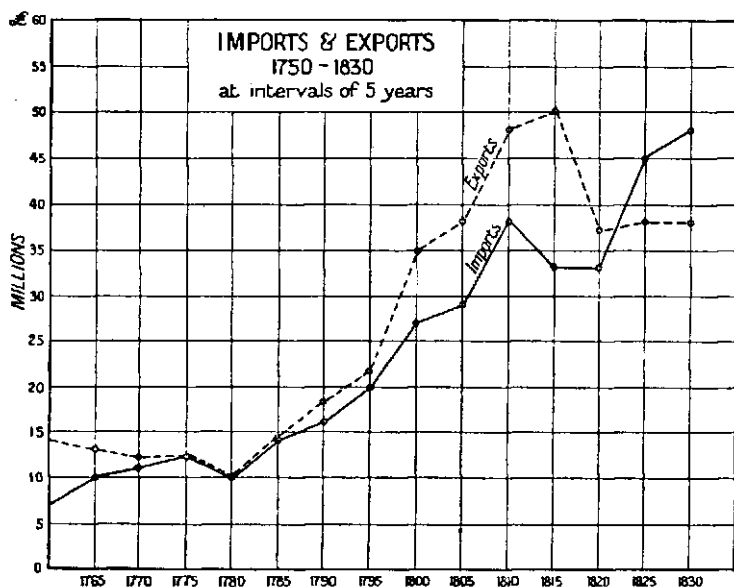
de Hollande	-	-	-	2	2½ p. C.
Dunkerque, Havre, Rouen	-	-	-	2½	- 3
Bordeaux, Rochelle, Nantes	-	-	-	4½	- 5½
Londres, Hull, Newcastle	-	-	-	2½	- 3½
Bristol, Liverpool	-	-	-	5	- 6
Bayonne, Bilbao	-	-	-	5	- 6
Lisbonne, Porto	-	-	-	6	- 7
Cadix, Malaga, Alicante	-	-	-	7	- 8
Barcelone, Cette, Marseille	-	-	-	7	- 8
Genes, Livourne, Messine	-	-	-	6	- 8
Venise, Trieste, Callipoli	-	-	-	7	- 9
Groenland	-	-	-	-	- -
Amerique Septentr.	-	-	-	6	- 7
Aschangel	-	-	-	6	- 7
Petersbourg, Riga, Revel	-	-	-	5	- 6
Stockholm	-	-	-	5	- 6
Koningberg, Danzig, Pomeran	-	-	-	4	- 5
Jutland, Brene	-	-	-	3	- 4
Norwege, Gathembourg	-	-	-	3	- 4
Copenhague	-	-	-	3	-

*In spite of prohibitive insurance rates, trade increased.*

Newspaper cutting of 1795.

best to strangle our commerce and failed; in retaliation we tried to kill the trade of the rest of Europe, and to a large extent succeeded. Quite early in the war France, fighting for her life against the allied monarchies of Europe, began to seize neutral ships; England laid an embargo on French ships and gradually closed the ports of her allies to France. In spite of prohibitive insurance rates, trade increased. In the first place a series of bad harvests from 1792 forced us to import corn, and the enormous output of our textiles demanded markets at any cost.

Convinced that the backbone of European resistance to him was English gold, made by English trade, Napoleon set out to kill the source of that wealth. Early in 1806 England had tried to strike at neutral trading with France by declaring a blockade from Brest to the Elbe, though in actual fact it was only carried



out at the mouth of the Seine and in the narrow seas. This gave Napoleon a chance of posing as the champion of neutrals, and in the BERLIN DECREES (1806) he denounced the blockade as a breach of international law, and as a reprisal declared the British Isles to be in a state of blockade, and ordered that no English ship was to enter the harbour of any French ally. In 1807 the ORDERS IN COUNCIL retaliated by refusing to allow *any* ship to go where English ships could not, and seized as lawful prize the vessels of all French allies. In spite of our command of the sea, by 1809 Napoleon had won considerable success; Denmark, Sweden, and Austria had been forced into the 'con-

*The Number of Ships and their Tonnage that have cleared outwards and entered inwards at the Port of Liverpool, from the Year 1751 to the Year 1793.*

**Inwards.**

**Outwards.**

Year.	British.		Foreign.		British.		Foreign.	
	Ships.	Tons.	Ships.	Tons.	Ships.	Tons.	Ships.	Tons.
1751	523	29,178	20	2535	588	31,185	20	2508
1752	529	29,137	46	5430	561	31,777	48	5884
1753	584	34,221	28	3515	601	34,689	22	3085
1754	577	32,255	44	5710	588	33,435	42	5843
1755	507	33,159	29	3425	519	30,660	27	3315
1756	522	29,793	48	5195	607	35,426	42	4542
1757	554	32,386	68	7300	609	37,881	57	7268
1758	602	36,263	63	7396	641	38,502	56	6277
1759	519	33,006	112	17,789	551	35,079	117	14,498
1760	556	36,884	76	10,535	592	37,157	81	11,663
1761	529	32,809	80	11,043	654	40,268	60	8223
1762	623	45,540	94	12,344	614	39,304	102	13,844
1763	574	39,714	78	11,584	700	44,863	92	13,596
1764	695	46,387	71	10,112	772	50,709	58	8132
1765	738	53,030	65	8134	795	53,807	70	9811
1766	646	51,623	54	7825	708	51,012	69	9370
1767	663	51,690	70	8011	784	57,376	66	9482
1768	727	54,949	57	7225	826	60,379	59	7950
1769	759	58,348	77	10,784	907	62,499	78	11,329
1770	743	46,062	63	7965	942	66,516	79	10,381
1771	764	59,734	55	6924	959	73,432	65	10,366
1772	857	68,812	68	8401	1022	81,689	73	11,284
1773	970	70,392	57	7111	1022	76,588	64	9366
1774	989	79,315	61	8032	973	76,892	64	8744
1775	1016	86,382	56	7294	983	76,656	57	7494
1776	901	74,140	81	12,991	937	68,488	75	11,616
1777	893	70,792	101	11,627	979	71,295	96	11,852
1778	838	76,277	100	13,242	857	63,420	95	11,782
1779	742	57,103	136	17,623	908	64,836	149	19,379
1780	739	58,769	133	17,087	880	61,573	151	19,202
1781	801	58,914	169	22,569	1021	65,477	182	25,899
1782	847	66,290	169	23,107	968	64,481	213	30,295
1783	1165	96,089	206	28,376	1355	105,074	222	32,294
1784	1217	122,263	162	26,091	1333	113,481	160	26,958
1785	1427	127,388	129	21,576	1446	122,195	129	21,990
1786	1381	140,224	150	27,611	1337	128,766	140	28,194
1787	1348	153,625	161	26,903	1474	159,834	180	31,715
1788	1570	140,812	152	25,600	1673	186,355	156	26,973
1789	1603	171,672	89	15,202	1486	170,369	87	14,456
1790	1864	205,440	200	35,677	1779	201,641	106	36,143
1791	1814	220,318	254	46,878	1904	225,641	263	46,839
1792	1832	225,242	215	41,166	1926	231,277	212	41,213
1793	1704	188,286	215	41,177	1739	169,770	240	47,719

*From Aikin's Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles round Manchester, 1795.*

tinental system', and our treatment of neutrals was rapidly alienating the United States. It is possible that he would have succeeded, had he not, by his interference in Spain, caused the revolt of the South American colonies and so thrown open to us their markets. The enormous amount of our textile production and its cheapness, sweated out of the hand-weavers, enabled us to stand the cost of a huge smuggling trade, so that



FORTUNES MADE BY STEAM, 1825. From a satirical print.

the Berlin Decrees were largely evaded. High farming at home made us nearly self-sufficing in food, and so we were able to hold out, and as at the same time with our fleet we cut off all raw material from Europe, it was Napoleon's alliances that broke down first. That the war brought wealth to some is shown by the fact that an income-tax of 2s. in the pound realized in 1798 the sum of £6,200,000, and in 1813 £14,485,000, the index figure of living for the two years being approximately the same.

After peace came a drop in trade, which continued till 1820, and then a slow increase, varied by the wild speculation of 1825



and its resultant crash. The graph of imports and exports is interesting in one or two other points. After 1795 the imports drop away from the exports; now actually of course if you sell exports you get back the same value of imports; the difference here is represented by the gold that poured into the country, and—we may add—poured out again in the huge subsidies by which Pitt maintained in being the continental opposition to Napoleon. But after 1825 the imports rise above the exports, and never again in our history have they changed their relative position. Were we then pouring gold out of the country? Not necessarily; in this case the difference is probably represented by the services rendered by our ships in carrying goods, which have been since 1800 an important item of 'concealed exports', as they are sometimes called. Another factor which enables us to buy apparently more than we sell lies in the interest paid on English capital invested abroad, which also during our period increased rapidly with improving transit.

**Decay of the Mercantile System.** As the eighteenth century drew to a close it became more and more evident that the end of the old system of regulated trade was near. We have noted the new treaty with France in 1786, but the political needs of war prevented any further relaxations, though the manufacturing community was becoming very restive at the hands that held them; and five years after the peace, in 1820, the MERCHANTS OF LONDON definitely petitioned the Government to remove all duties not imposed purely for revenue. Edinburgh followed, and as a result a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire and report.

In 1823 Huskisson took office as President of the Board of Trade, and by degrees he greatly modified the tariff. He removed prohibitions and reduced duties till the highest was 30 per cent., making those on raw materials specially light. He also increased the warehousing system, so that many more articles could be kept in bond, duty free, till needed or re-exported. At the same time the stringent rules as to trade with the Colonies were greatly relaxed, their trade for the most part being thrown open to the

world. Already our ports had been opened to ships of all nations on the same terms as they were willing to allow ours. From now till the end of our period men like Peel and Huskisson became more and more influential, but the real battle of Free Trade and Protection was delayed till the forties.

**Transit.** **ROADS.** After 1760 there was a great increase in the number and extent of turnpike roads and the travelling coach became common. Still there were many roads left in a deplorable condition, and the farmers often opposed improvement, because they feared the competition of wider markets. Even as late as 1815 London streets were often dangerous to traverse. Telford and McAdam revolutionized road-making in the early part of the nineteenth century, and the average speed of coaches rose from four or five to seven or eight miles an hour; a speed of even twelve miles per hour was attained between Liverpool and Manchester, and was the subject of complaint in the House of Commons. The palmy period of coaching was from 1820 to 1836. At the later date there were 3,000 coaches running, with 150,000 horses and 30,000 coachmen, guards, ostlers, &c. From one London tavern 80 coaches started daily to the north and from another 53 to the west. The cost in horses was terrible, and the ten miles an hour speed used up a horse in three or four years. At this time there were 1,116 turnpike trusts controlling 22,000 miles of road. The system was inefficient and wasteful, and many of the trusts were insolvent. The decline of coaching made matters worse. They raised their tolls and increased the frequency of their gates, thereby exasperating the public, while the poorer trusts took the tolls and left the roads unmended. In 1841 they were allowed, if necessary, to draw on the highway rate of the parishes, a concession which was a State subsidy to inefficiency. In 1864 a special committee recommended the winding up of all turnpike trusts, and this was done by degrees. The care of the roads was thrown back on the parishes, and no further remedy provided for twenty-five years.

**WATERWAYS.** English roads being so bad one would expect a large use to have been made of transit by water, and indeed

**REDUCED FARES**  
From the  
**CROWN INN, REDCROSS-STREET.**



The Public are respectfully informed, that the  
**COMMODORE,**

**A NEW AND ELEGANT POST COACH,**  
**H**AS commenced Running from this Office,  
every Morning, quarter before Seven o'clock,  
through Preston and Garstang, to the Royal Oak  
and King's Arms Inns, Lancaster.

Fares to Lancaster, Inside 7s. Outside 5s.

Fares to Kendal, ditto 10s. ditto 7s.

**CARLISLE Post Coach,** every Morning at  
Eight o'clock, through Preston, Lancaster, Kendal,  
Shap and Penrith, to the Bush Inn and Coffee  
House, Carlisle, in Eighteen Hours.

**WHITEHAVEN Coach,** through Kendal,  
Ambleside, Keswick, Cocker-mouth, Maryport, &c.  
to the King's Arms Inn, Whitehaven, every Morning  
at Eight o'clock, Sunday excepted.

**ULVERSTONE, Carlisle, Dalton and Miln-  
thorpe Coach,** every Morning at a quarter before  
Seven and Eight o'clock.

**EDINBURGH Light Post Coach,** through  
Linghoin, Howick, Selkirk and Middleton, to the  
Black Bull, Edinburgh, every Morning.

**GLASGOW Post Coach,** through Erelefechan,  
Lockerby, Moffat, Elvanfoot, Douglas, Hamilton,  
to the Trongate Inn, Glasgow, every Morning at  
Eight.

**YORK and Harrogate, the Royal Pilot, Light  
Post Coach,** (only four inside) every Morning at  
Five o'clock, through Preston, Blackburn, Whalley,  
Clitheroe, Gisburn, Skipton, Oley. Weatherby,  
arrives at the Black Swan and York Tavern York,  
at half past Nine o'clock, returns from thence by the  
same route every Morning, at Six o'clock.

**PORT-PATRICK and Dumfries Coach,** by  
Castle Douglas, Newton-Douglas, Glenbus, Stran-  
raer, to Port-Patrick, from whence a safe and im-  
mediate passage to Donaghadee, in Ireland, may be  
obtained, being only sixteen miles across the water.

**HULL, Gainsborough, Scarborough, Whitby,  
Durham Sunderland, Shields, Newcastle-upon Tyne  
and Morpeth Coaches,** every Morning at Five  
o'clock, also at Eight o'clock.

**ROYAL MAIL** to Carlisle, every Afternoon, at  
a quarter past Five o'clock, to the Bush Inn,  
Coffee-house, Carlisle,

Performed by

**F. BRETHERTON, & Co.**

Who are not accountable for any Box, Trunk,  
Parcel or Packages of any description, unless en-  
tered and insurance paid for accordingly.

**Crown Inn, Redcross-street, Liverpool.**



**NEW POST COACH,**

(Only Four Inside)

**TO LONDON.**

**CALLED PRINCE SAKE COBOURG,**

**L**EAVES the above Inn every Morning at Seven  
o'clock, and arrives at the SWAN, FIVE-TWO-  
BRICKS, LAD-LANE, LONDON, the following day, at  
Three o'clock precisely.

Performed by **SAMUEL HENSHAW & Co.**  
Liverpool;

Who are happy to announce, they have succeeded in  
establishing this Coach on the most-respectable sys-  
tem. It performs its Journey in less time than others,  
not by excessive driving, but by its taking the short-  
est route, and strict attention paid that no time is un-  
necessarily lost. Steady Coachmen and Guards are  
selected; and the Public are respectfully informed,  
that every exertion has been used to complete it a  
respectable, safe, pleasant, and expeditious convey-  
ance, well guarded and lighted, and only four Coach-  
men.

**TIME BILL,**

FROM LIVERPOOL TO LONDON,  
Off at Seven o'clock.

Miles.	Time allowed.		Towns.	Time to arrive	
	M.	M.		M.	M.
18	2	30	At Warrington .....	9	30
12	1	35	Knutsford .....	11	5
14	2	5	Congleton .....	1	10
13	1	30	Burslem .....	2	40
			Dinner, and off .....	5	18
11	1	30	At Stone .....	4	40
22	3	20	Lichfield .....	8	0
			Supper, and off .....	8	50
15	2	10	At Coleshill .....	10	40
12	1	50	Coventry .....	12	20
11	1	30	Dunchurch .....	2	0
8	1	10	Daventry .....	3	10
12	1	50	Towcester .....	5	0
8	1	10	Stratford .....	6	10
			Breakfast, and off .....	6	40
27½	4	25	At Redburn .....	11	5
11½	1	25	Mims .....	12	00
17	2	30	London .....	3	0
	32	0			

To arrive in London at three o'clock precisely.  
NOTE—If the above Time be not strictly kept,  
(accidents excepted), the Passengers are particularly  
requested not to give the Coachman or Guard their  
usual perquisite.

FROM THE ABOVE INN, COACHES PROCEED  
TO EVERY PART OF THE KINGDOM.

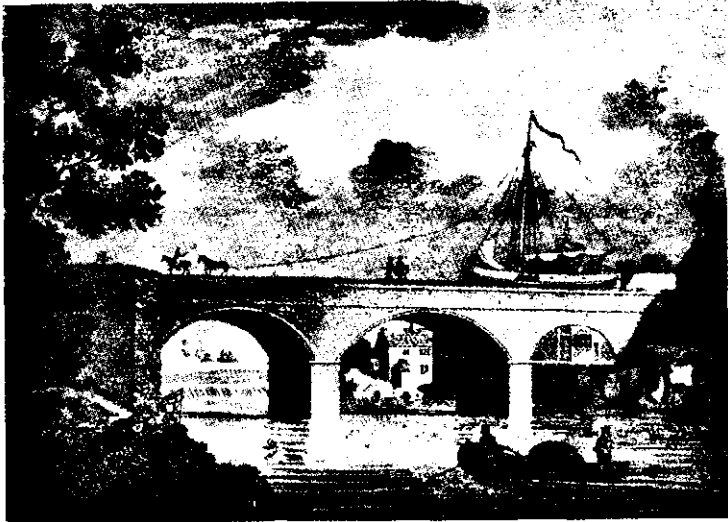
A Table of all the Locks, Weirs, Bridges, &amp;c upon the River Thames, from Lechlade, to London Bridge, 1787

From Locks to	Miles	Locks	Weirs	Bridges	Other
Lechlade to	1	1	1	1	1
St. John's Bridge	2	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	3	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	4	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	5	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	6	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	7	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	8	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	9	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	10	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	11	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	12	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	13	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	14	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	15	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	16	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	17	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	18	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	19	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	20	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	21	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	22	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	23	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	24	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	25	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	26	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	27	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	28	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	29	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	30	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	31	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	32	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	33	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	34	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	35	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	36	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	37	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	38	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	39	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	40	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	41	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	42	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	43	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	44	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	45	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	46	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	47	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	48	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	49	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	50	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	51	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	52	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	53	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	54	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	55	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	56	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	57	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	58	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	59	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	60	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	61	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	62	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	63	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	64	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	65	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	66	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	67	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	68	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	69	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	70	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	71	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	72	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	73	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	74	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	75	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	76	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	77	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	78	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	79	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	80	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	81	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	82	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	83	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	84	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	85	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	86	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	87	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	88	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	89	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	90	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	91	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	92	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	93	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	94	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	95	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	96	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	97	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	98	1	1	1	1
St. John's Lock	99	1	1	1	1
St. John's Weir	100	1	1	1	1

## LOCKS AND TOLLS on the Thames. From Bowles's Draught of the River Thames.

such had been the case. Since pack-horses were the only possible means of carriage in many districts and the roads in winter almost impassable everywhere, heavy goods were usually forwarded by river or sea. For example, all through the Middle Ages and up to the eighteenth century, Bawtry on the Idle was an important port. In the map no place could look more inland, lying in the hollow of south Yorkshire between Doncaster and Retford. Yet it was, all through these centuries, the main port of export for Sheffield goods, which reached it by a road journey of twenty miles and thence passed in barges down the Idle into the Trent via Stockwith to Hull and thence by sea to the East Coast, London, and the Continent. England, in fact, was studded with these river ports, such as Willington near Burton-on-Trent and Winsford on the Weaver, from which the pottery of Staffordshire found its way east and west. But river transit has peculiar difficulties, especially on the small rivers of England, which are apt to flood, to dry up, or to make shoals or rapids, with the delightful uncertainty of the English climate. Attempts at improvements of the river beds themselves had proved costly and not always successful, and the step

from artificial short cuts in the rivers to entire artificial rivers was not long delayed. The first of the canals has already been referred to,<sup>1</sup> and after 1750 an extensive system was developed. It was the enterprise of the Duke of Bridgewater and the genius of James Brindley, a self-educated engineer, that started the movement. In 1760 carriage between Manchester and Liverpool by



THE BRIDGEWATER CANAL crossing the Irwell.

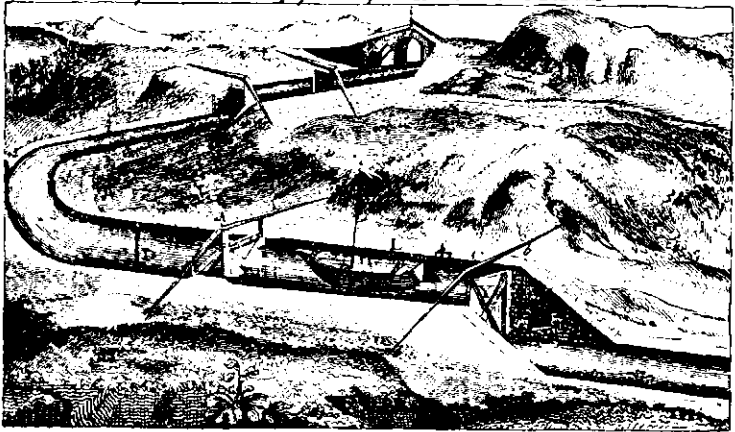
From Aikin's *Description of the Country from Thirsty to Forty Miles round Manchester*, 1795.

road cost £2 a ton, by water along the Mersey and Irwell it cost 12s., but was very uncertain and tedious. When the Duke of Bridgewater proposed a canal he was fought by the vested interest of the river navigation monopoly, just as later the canals fought the railways. The scheme proved very costly, and the duke's resources were stretched to the utmost, though he reduced his personal expenditure to £400 a year and Brindley's salary to £1 a week, and not always that. This canal was completed in

<sup>1</sup> See p. 287.

1773, and his two canals cost the duke £220,000. The new highway increased Manchester trade and made Liverpool; for previously the export route had been via Bridgnorth and the Severn. In 1766 Brindley started on the Grand Trunk Canal to link the Mersey, Severn, and Trent. The engineering feat was considerable, involving a rise of 395 feet with two flights of 35 and 40 locks respectively, five tunnels, one being  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles long, and five aqueducts over the Dove and Trent. It was

*Perspective view of part of a Canal with Locks*



opened in 1777, and Hull was thus linked with Liverpool. Later the Trent was connected with the Severn via Wolverhampton and with the Thames via Lichfield and Oxford. The new communications made possible the pottery developments of Josiah Wedgwood. The cost of carriage by canal was about one quarter that by road.

In 1769 the forty-one years' work on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal was begun. This had to be carried over a rise of over 500 ft. and through a tunnel nearly a mile long. And so the work went on in spite of the usual opposition with the usual artificial arguments: the new system would diminish the breed

of horses, would injure the coastal trade, weaken the navy. The road carriers, the innkeepers, the farmers (who objected to wasting good grain land by covering it with water), all raised their cry. But in the end a whole system was made that linked up Liverpool, Hull, Bristol, and London, a system which the coming railways first bought up and then disastrously allowed to fall into disuse.

SHIPS AND DOCKS. As remarkable as anything was the increase and development of our shipping. In 1760 we are still in the line of development from the days of Drake. Most trading vessels were about 300 tons burden; East Indiamen built specially for the trade ranged from 700 to 1,000 tons. About 1770 copper was first used to sheathe ships' bottoms, and thus frequent carenage could be avoided.

During the war the size and number of vessels increased both by building and by capture. In the American War of 1812 we found ourselves outclassed and began to build larger ships up to 3,000 tons. Compared to modern ships they were rather tubs, the length being generally about four times the beam. In 1802 the first steamboat appeared on the Clyde, the *Charlotte Dundas*; in 1807 there was one in America; in 1812 the *Comet* was running successful passenger services, and by 1821 steam-packets plied the Channel and the Irish Sea. All these were wooden boats and driven by paddles. In 1819 the *Savannah* crossed the Atlantic in 29½ days under sail and steam (but only 89 hours of the voyage were with steam), and a Government cutter chased her for a day off Ireland, thinking she was on fire! The first steam voyage to Calcutta was achieved in 1825. A few iron boats appeared after 1818, but the use of this metal was very slowly adopted.

Up to the end of the eighteenth century most ships discharged their cargoes either directly on to wharves by the river-side or into lighters and barges. In rivers, such as the Thames, the Mersey, and the Bristol Avon, where the rise and fall of the tide was considerable, the first of these plans was difficult, and the second became increasingly dangerous as the size of ships

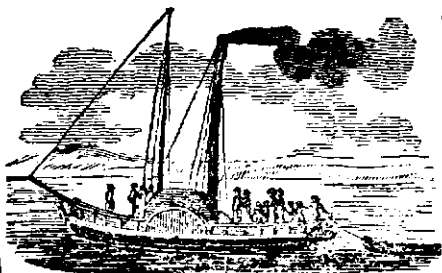
increased. Besides this, the discharging of cargoes into lighters and the enormous number of labourers engaged in the process gave opportunity for endless thieving. Casks were secretly tapped or caused to leak, bags of sugar and spices opened or cut and part of their contents abstracted, and even the tackle and fitments of the vessels themselves carried off under cover of the dark. The pilfering became a systematized trade, fully comparable to the smuggling of the same era, and mates of vessels and watchmen were well paid to connive at it. It was said that as much as thirty guineas would be passed to a ship's officer to shut his eyes to a night's prowling in the ship's hold, while lighters and bumboats hovered round ready to dash off with the spoil. One merchant discovered that the lightermen loaded his oil barrels upside down and claimed the oil that thus flowed into their hold as perquisite; the booty of one load amounted to fourteen casks full.

Previous to 1750 there had been few wet docks in Great Britain; docks at Rotherhithe, on the Surrey side of the Thames, have existed since the middle of the seventeenth century, and Glasgow had a harbour and a graving dock by 1662. In 1715 the first dock at Liverpool was opened, and three more were added by the end of the century. Then began the development of London; in 1802 the West India Dock was opened, covering some twelve acres of water-space in two divisions, with ample quays and warehouses; in 1829 the South Dock was added. The London Docks were opened in 1805, to receive tobacco, rice, wine, and brandy, and St. Katharine's followed in 1828. Liverpool had ten docks by 1834, and most of the leading ports followed.

**POSTS AND NEWS.** A general postal service developed very gradually. In 1683 there was a penny post in London, and later there was a service for a twelve-mile radius from the General Post Office, with charges according to distance. In 1785 John Palmer introduced a system of post by stage-coach, and by the end of the eighteenth century most large towns had a daily delivery, and small ones two or three times a week. The postage



Read and be Accommodated.



**ETNA,**

**TRANMERE FERRY STEAM PACKET.**

**T** HIS Packet has commenced running from the New Slip, at the West Side of the Queen's Dock Graving Docks, where every convenience will be found for taking on board and discharging Carriages, Carts, Horses, and Cattle of every description, going to and from Cheshire, without the trouble that has hitherto been experienced in the Common Sail Boats, and which it is the intention of the Proprietors as much as possible to obviate. This Vessel is peculiarly adapted for Carriages, &c. to drive on board, without the trouble of UNHARNESSING, and will be found a most eligible and safe Conveyance for Gentlemen going to

**CHESTER RACES,**

As she crosses from Liverpool to Tranmere every half hour, remaining only ten minutes on each side.

**TERMS OF PASSAGE:**

A Four-wheeled Carriage, with two Horses	s.	d.
and Passengers.....	10	0
A Gig and Horse, with Passengers.....	4	0
If more than one Horse, extra for each...	1	0
Should any of the above return the same day, Half Price will be charged.		
Horse and Rider.....	1	6
Cattle, per head.....	1	0
Sheep, per score.....	3	0
Pigs and Calves.....	0	3
Cart and Horse.....	4	0
Large Ditto and two Horses.....	5	6
Half Price for Carts returning the same day.		
Corn, Flour, Meal, Bran, &c. per	0	2
Passengers on Sundays.....	0	4
Ditto, Working Days.....	0	3
Market People, allowed to carry three Baskets or Hampers without any additional charge.....	0	3

Performed by **BATMAN, FRENCH & Co.**

Liverpool, 1st May, 1817.

From *The Liverpool Mercury*, May 2, 1817

was collected on delivery. A letter to Edinburgh or Dublin from London cost 6*d.* To India and the Colonies the postal service was partly controlled by the Admiralty, and delivery seemed a matter of chance.

¶ The earliest DAILY NEWSPAPER appeared in Dublin in 1700. The first English daily was the *Daily Courant* in 1702; after 1776 there were several in London, including the *Morning Post* (1772) and *The Times* (1788). The duty on each issue in 1797 was 3½*d.* per paper, and the price 6½*d.* or 7*d.* There was also

**I**F any sober Family of 3 or 4 and some tolerable Substance, will look after a large House, about 20 Miles from London; he shall have an Apartment *gratis*, with a Dairy, pretty large Kitchen, Gardens and Orchards new planted. There will be a great many Herbs for distillation: There are 2 good Market-Towns a Mile on each Hand, to which Post comes 3 times a Week, and Carriers as often, and Coach to and fro every Day.

THE POST. Advertisement from Houghton's *Collection for Improvement of Husbandry and Trade*, Aug. 28, 1696.

a tax on advertisements. In 1819 a bond was demanded of each paper as security for fines if inflicted for blasphemous or seditious libel.

**Banking and Finance.** There was a considerable development of banking during this period of great industrial expansion. The Bank of England maintained its monopoly in London, and was a comparatively firm rock in a shifting world. In 1763 the speculation that had prevailed throughout Europe during the Seven Years' War met the consequent crisis and there was a general crash, which included the great house of Neuville Bros. in Amsterdam. English merchants were affected, and only saved by advances from the Bank of nearly a million. The Bank's charter was renewed in 1764.

The effect of the industrial revolution on finance was the great demand for advances and for circulating media. Bank of

England notes did not circulate outside London ; moreover, the country areas had great need of credit facilities. Country banks rapidly increased in number, but since the law did not allow banks of issue (i. e. banks issuing their own notes) to have more than six partners, the provision of large stable banking companies was impossible and numbers of small ones arose ; all sorts of people, chemists, tailors, shopkeepers, bakers, taking to banking. In 1750 there were not twelve banks outside London, by 1793 there were 400, most of them with inadequate supplies of cash or credit to cover their issue of notes. Meanwhile the great Bank had been learning, at a price, how to meet the expanding needs of the merchants. There had been crises in 1770 and 1774 and in 1783. After this last the Bank adopted the rule of restricting note issues when gold began to be withdrawn and increasing them as the gold flowed back. In 1793 came a serious crisis of trade with the outbreak of war. The previous year had been bad, and in November the number of bankruptcies had been double the usual rate. In February 1793 the Bank refused to advance money on the securities offered by a house, which in consequence failed for a million, and the failure spread. The Bank, anxious for its own safety, contracted its issues, raised the rate at which it advanced money, and waited events. Pitt saved the situation by promising to advance five millions in Exchequer Bills to merchants on security of goods of all kinds. Actually only two millions were needed, and the Government made a small profit on the transaction. Only two of the borrowers went bankrupt. For two years things were quietly prosperous, but 1797 brought a serious crisis which had been foreshadowed in 1795. There were several causes :

1. In 1793 Parliament had passed an Act allowing the Government to draw on the Bank of England to an unlimited amount. Pitt, believing the war was going to be short, and afraid to risk heavy taxation, exercised his power and drew advances in four years of nearly 10 millions, besides floating costly loans.

2. Gold was pouring out of the country in subsidies to the

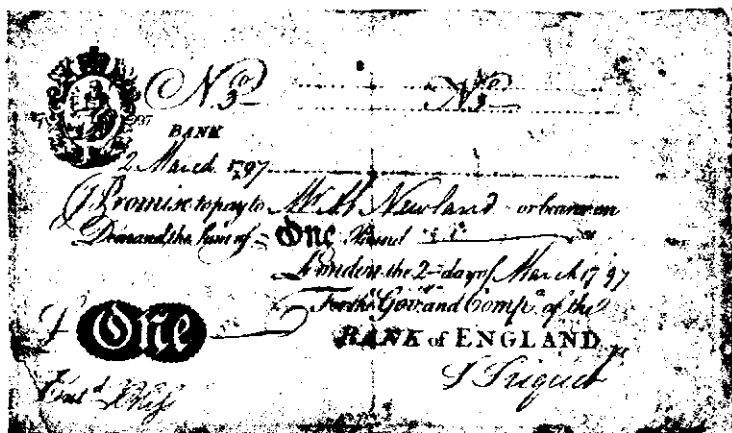
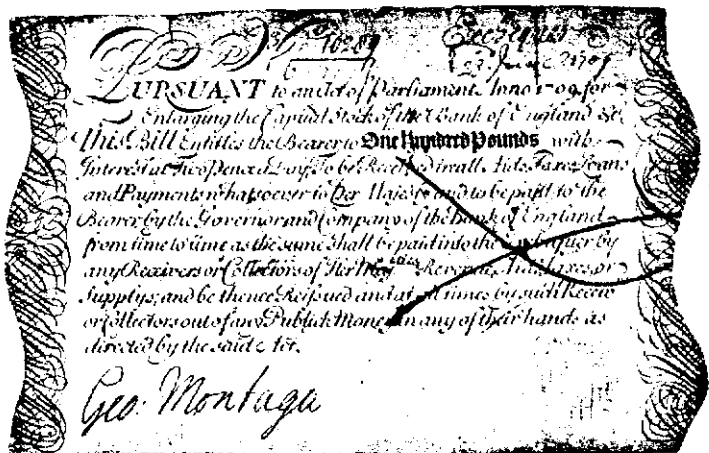
allies and in naval expenditure. In four years some 37 millions had gone in this way. The Bank made up the diminishing circulation by note issues, and so still further decreased its relative reserve of gold.

3. The country banks were in great disorder, and in crises drew on the Bank of England for gold.

4. There was a panic over a French invasion, and people withdrew and hoarded gold.

The Bank, though solvent, had not the gold to pay the claims on it, and in 1797 the BANK RESTRICTION ACT was passed, suspending cash payments of bank-notes and allowing unlimited issue of notes. Up to 1809 this power was used sparingly; Pitt ceased demanding advances and took to taxation, and things went more smoothly. After 1809 the effect of the mutual blockades made trade an increasingly risky investment. The opening of the South American markets, already noticed, added to the fury of speculation, and the Bank lent itself to the general trend, and increased its note issues, reaching in 1810 the sum of 21 millions, and the country banks supplied probably 30 millions more. Hence the price of gold rose and the exchange fell seriously. In 1810 the REPORT OF THE BULLION COMMITTEE advised resumption of cash payments, and expressed the opinion that the rise in the price of bullion and the fall of the exchange were due to over-issue of notes. They were not believed and Parliament rejected the report. The effect of the depreciation of the bank-note was serious; landlords lost as much as 17 per cent. of the real value of the rents, and creditors of long standing as much as 30 per cent. to 40 per cent. of the sums owed them. In 1814-15 with the coming of peace came the crash; many country banks failed, and the general note issue was thus lessened. In 1816 the Bank resumed partial cash payments, and in 1819 an Act ordered their complete restoration by 1823; actually they were resumed in 1821.

Meanwhile, a number of joint-stock banks had been founded which were not authorized to issue notes, but which worked by



THE GROWTH OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND. Above, a £100 Exchequer Note of 1709. Below, one of the first £1 notes which were issued in the financial crisis of 1797

means of cheques.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1775 a clearing-house had been established in London. A clearing-house is a place where all the cheques drawn on the several banks and paid into other banks are set off against one another and the net balances due are determined. By 1814, of 940 private banks, 207 were of the kind that did not issue notes. In 1826 an Act authorized the formation of joint-stock banks of issue outside a 65 miles radius from London. But the cheque system was fully established, and was destined to supersede notes almost entirely. In 1832 an inquiry into our banking system was held, and it was followed by the Act of 1833. This Act made bank-notes legal tender, ordered the Bank to publish its accounts, repaid part of the Government debt to the Bank, but reduced its yearly payment to the Bank for managing the public debt. It also declared joint-stock banks issuing cheques to be legal, a point about which there had been some doubt. Immediately the London and Westminster Bank was founded in London. The charter of the Bank of England was renewed till 1855.

**Coinage.** There was a great scarcity of silver coins to meet all this swift expansion of trade ; they were also much depreciated. The war in Spain had drawn £100,000,000 in bullion or coin out of the country. In 1816, after the war, gold was adopted as the legal standard, though with the exception of Portugal we remained the only gold country till 1871. Silver ceased to be legal tender for sums over 40s. In 1817 new coinage was issued, and the 20s. sovereign replaced the guinea of 21s.

**Joint-Stock Companies.** We have seen the beginning of joint-stock enterprises ; the South Sea Bubble of 1720 had considerably shaken public opinion, and an Act of Parliament had been passed ordering all joint-stock companies to be incorporated either by charter or by Act of Parliament. Adam Smith's influence was against them, for he held that since the system

<sup>1</sup> A note is a promise of a *bank* to pay, which must be honoured or the bank is bankrupt ; a cheque is a promise of an *individual* to pay, and is only honoured by the bank if it holds enough of the individual's money to cover it.

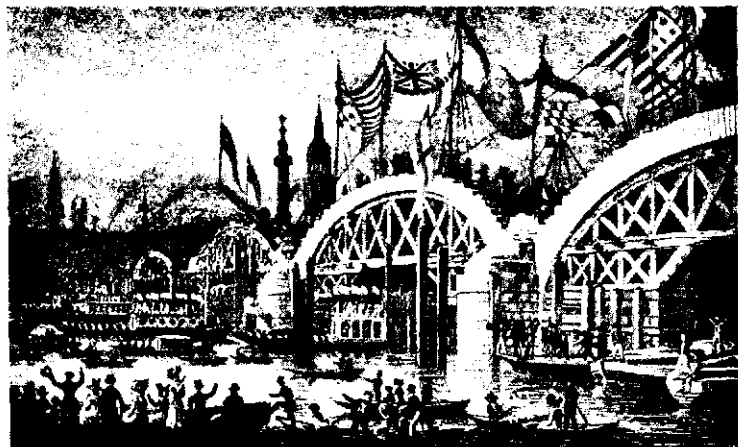
threw the direction of other people's money into the hands of a small group its administration must inevitably be wasteful or negligent. In fact, the whole tendency of the time was in favour of the single enterprising capitalist, who gave his money and his brains and staked all his resources on the success of the venture. He might possibly induce others to lend him money, as Arkwright did, but the investment of money in transferable shares in a concern over which one had no further control did not attract an age drunk with the glories of competitive individualism. Indeed, until some form of limitation of liability was devised, such investment could not be attractive, for the possession of a few pound shares in a badly bankrupt company might involve one's whole fortune, since all the partners were liable to the whole extent of their property for the debts of the insolvent business. However, in 1825, it was made possible to form a joint-stock company without getting a charter from Parliament.

**Summary.** 1. There was as great extension of our foreign trade as of our manufactures, and not even war nor the strangling grip of out-of-date regulation succeeded in stifling it. In every direction trade increased; new markets appeared and old ones grew. Belief in the old system of subordinating trade to national policy was rapidly dying, and by the end of the period the battle between Free Trade and Protection is already joined, and the preliminary skirmishes are foreshadowing the final victory of *laissez-faire*.

2. Communications of all kinds were greatly improved both in ease and speed. Canals were made throughout the country, roads restored to something of the state in which Rome had left them fourteen hundred years before, ships grew in speed and tonnage, and the beginning of steam-power appeared on the ocean. Posts became general, and newspapers a necessity, at least for the rich. England was ceasing to be an aggregation of more or less isolated villages.

3. Banking grew also to meet the new demands, and a commerce based on credit and paper currency started its amazing

career. All questions of money and credit became increasingly important, for England was leading the way to the establishment of a world-market and international finance.



NEW LONDON BRIDGE, with the Lord Mayor's Procession passing under the unfinished arches, Nov. 9, 1827.

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#### 4. Legislation and Government Action. Economic Theory. Taxation

**Chief Legislation of the Period** (excluding Factory Acts which were dealt with in chapter 2).

I. GENERAL ENCLOSURE ACTS. Private Enclosure Acts had gone merrily through Parliaments entirely indifferent to the fate of the poor until, in 1774, the same casual method, applied to a case in which a rich man was opposed to the scheme, brought a storm about the head of the Government. Whereupon a series



of Standing Orders were made to regulate procedure, some of which have already been mentioned.<sup>1</sup> On the whole they protected the large holder against the avarice of his fellow, but did nothing for the poorer.

General Enclosure Bills were recommended by two Parliamentary Committees, and were introduced in 1795, 1796, 1797, and 1800. In 1801 the first General Enclosure Act was passed. The object of these Bills was to standardize procedure and so lessen the cost of enclosure, and to allow a certain majority of holders to arrange enclosure without recourse to Parliament. The Board of Agriculture which drafted them, of which Arthur Young was secretary, inserted clauses making some provision for the poorer members of the village community. These clauses invariably disappeared as the Bills progressed through Parliament. The opposition to these Bills was so determined that in 1801 the Board confined itself to one that merely cheapened procedure, and this became law. An attempt in 1813 to avoid single Acts of Enclosure again failed, and it was not till 1836 that a real General Enclosure Act was passed.

2. The story of the CORN LAWS, the agitation against which becomes strong in the latter part of our period, must now be told. The Corn Law of 1689 remained in force till 1765. During that period it had apparently worked satisfactorily; prices had been low, but were prevented from sinking so low as to put land out of cultivation. After 1765 the principle of corn legislation remained the same, but the effect of war and of bad seasons caused frequent change in details. In 1773 all restrictions on internal trade in corn were abolished, and the prices at which import and export were allowed were frequently altered, in each case with the object of steadying prices and securing in war-time enough food for the population. But there were forces at work that no scheme of tariffs could control, and bad seasons and the impossibility of importing corn from countries devastated by war, and over seas infested by hostile navies, gradually ran prices up to famine limit. At the same time the high prices

<sup>1</sup> See p. 312.

had the effect of bringing much more land under cultivation, even uplands and wastes, which in normal times were not worth



## HUNTING A LOAF.

**G**OOD people I pray give ear unto what I say,  
And pray do not call it sedition, (pate,  
For these great men of late they have crack'd my  
I'm wounded in a woeful condition.

Fal lal de ral, &c.

For Derby it's true, and Nottingham too,  
Poor men to the jail they've been taking,  
'They say that Ned Lud as I understand,  
A thousand wide frames has been breaking.

Fal lal, &c.

Now is it not bad there's no work to be had,  
The poor to be starv'd in their station;  
And if they do steal they're strait sent to the jail,  
And they're hang'd by the laws of the nation.

Fal lal, &c.

Since this time last year I've been very queer,  
And I've had a sad national cross;  
I've been up and down, from town unto town,  
With a shilling to buy a big loaf.

Fal lal, &c.

The first that I met was Sir Francis Burdett,  
He told me he'd been in the Tower;  
I told him my mind a big loaf was to find,  
He said you must ask them in power.

Fal lal, &c.

more permanent, and Parliament met it by prohibiting import as long as wheat did not rise above 80s. Often prices kept below this, but a bad season sent them up, and a growing agitation against this protection of the farmer and landlord and exploita-

thinking of for corn-growing. It is usually considered that up to 1815, though the laws regulating export and import probably tended to steady prices (except when conditions became too abnormal), they kept a fair balance between producer and consumer.

After 1815 the growth of population had caught up the food-production of the country, and there was no margin to export, though freedom of export was allowed. On the other hand, the sudden cessation of war restored the possibility of import from the Continent, and prices dropped by over 100 per cent. Ruin faced the farmers and the landlords. In 1801 a similar thing had happened, and the limit below which import was not allowed was raised from 50s. to 63s., but war was renewed and prices rose again. The 1815 crisis was

tion of the consumer marks the rest of our period. The possibilities of importation increased yearly as American wheat became available, and the half-starved workers clamoured for food kept out of the markets by a Parliament of landlords, while the manufacturers



THE BORN ENGLISHMAN  
"The Amputation of the World"  
AND THE ENEMY OF SCARCENESS'S VIGILANCE

SATIRICAL CARTOON OF 1819

hoped that cheaper food would mean less money-wages and so cheapen production. The climax of the story is later than 1834.

3. The increasing severity of the GAME LAWS is one marked feature of the times. Up to 1770 game had hardly been rigorously preserved in this country, except the royal stag, the sport of kings. The changing attitude is foreshadowed by Fielding in the respective positions towards the poacher of Squires Allworthy

and Western. The sport of the rich became more exclusive, just at the moment when the degradation of the labourer made the wild birds and beasts of the woods essential to his existence. In 1770 an Act was passed making any one killing game at night punishable by 3-6 months' imprisonment on the evidence of one witness only. On a second conviction the penalty was 6-12 months and a public whipping. In 1800 the law was made more stringent, and two people found with a gun, or other evidence of intent to poach, were liable to imprisonment with hard labour, and on a second conviction to two years and a whipping, or the offender might be sentenced to serve in the army or navy. This severe Act tended to make the culprits resort to violence rather than be taken, and to work in gangs for mutual protection. In 1803 such resistance was made punishable by death. In 1816 a man found at night unarmed, but with a net for poaching, was made liable to seven years' transportation. The severity of the Act defeated its purpose, for gradually juries became unwilling to convict, and in 1825 it was modified, and transportation reserved for the second offence. An attempt in 1831 to modify the punishments was defeated in the House of Lords.

That the laws were not a dead letter is shown by the numbers convicted, 8,502 in three years (1827-30), many of them mere boys. And it must be remembered that most of the magistrates were game preservers, with no pity or sympathy for a starving poacher. Also it must be recognized that the labourers themselves attached no shame to the act of poaching. They entirely refused to regard it as stealing: 'the wild beasts of the field were there for the use of all'. They were paid starvation wages, and then if they dared to help themselves to what they regarded as nature's bounty they were condemned to the life of outcasts. At one assize in 1829 seven men were transported for life, nine for fourteen years, for one poaching fray alone. But even savage laws did not seem enough to the gentlemen of England in the battle of 'sport' versus starvation. Some time before 1817 the setting of spring-guns became common, and men were



**THE SEVERITY OF THE GAME LAWS.** Satirical cartoon dedicated 'To the Most Noble, the Right Honourable *the* Honourable Nobility and Gentry, associated for the Preservation of the Game.'

killed and wounded in considerable numbers. After some ten years the accidents due to lack of discrimination on the part of the guns, which unfortunately could not distinguish between a trespasser and a gamekeeper, caused so much scandal that the law stepped in and made spring-guns illegal. There were a few men bold and public-spirited enough to speak against this savage upholding of the pleasures of the rich against the depredations of the poor. Turner, member for York in 1782, Fox in 1796, and Sheridan, Curwen, and Romilly raised their voices in vain.

4. The COMBINATION LAWS of 1799 and 1800 have already been described,<sup>1</sup> but even these were not drastic enough for some, and any old law that could be twisted for use against the workers was unsparingly used. In 1819, when distress was great and the Government even more than usual in a panic, the notorious SIX ACTS were passed. By these public meetings that in any way criticized the Government were suppressed, search for arms authorized, all working-class publications subjected to the stamp duty, and the law of seditious libel tightened.

The SUSPENSION in 1802, and the REPEAL in 1813, of the LAWS EMPOWERING JUSTICES TO FIX WAGES were the answers of the Government to the attempts by the workers to call the law to their aid, and in 1814 the laws regulating apprenticeships went too.

5. The changes in the POOR LAW by Act of Parliament were not great. In 1782 Gilbert's Act ordered that able-bodied poor should be found work, not sent to workhouses; hence developed the 'roundsman'<sup>2</sup> and other systems. In 1796 Pitt proposed as an alternative to a minimum wage a reform of the Poor Law, and in 1797 a Bill for that purpose was discussed. It proposed to train children in 'Schools of Industry', to make allowances to families of more than two children, and to find employment for indigent folk. People unable to earn full wages were to have them supplemented from the rates, and money might be advanced to help a poor man to buy a cow or other animal. A man need not be utterly destitute before obtaining help. If

<sup>1</sup> See p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 328.



# VAN DIEMAN'S LAND

Bebbington, Printer, 22, Goulden St. Oldham Road Manchester  
and sold by H. Andrews, 27, St. Peter Street, Leeds.

Come all you gallant poachers, that ramble void of care,  
That walk out on a moonlight night, with your dog, gun, and  
snare;

The hare and lofty pheasant you have at your command,  
Not thinking of your last career upon Van Dieman's Land.

Poor Thomas Brown, of Nottingham, Jack Williams, and Poor  
Joe,

Were three determin'd poachers, as the country well doth know  
At night they were trepann'd by the keepers hid in sand,  
And fourteen years transported were upon Van Dieman's Land

The first day we landed upon the fatal shore,  
The planters came around us—their might be 20 score,  
They rank'd us up like horses and sold us out of hand, (Land.  
They yok'd us in a plough, brave boys, to plough Van Dieman's

Our cottages we live in are built of clods and clay,  
And rotten straw for bedding, yet we dare not say nay,  
Around our cots a curling fire—we slumber when we can,  
And drive the wolves and tigers oft upon Van Dieman's Land.

Oft times when I do slumber, I have a pleasant dream,  
With my sweet girl sitting near me close by a purling stream  
Thro' England I've been roaming, with her at my command,  
And waken broken-hearted upon Van Dieman's Land.

THE GAME LAWS. BROADSIDE OF THE TIME

passed, the Act would have produced much the same results as the Speenhamland scheme,<sup>1</sup> and though the clauses that allowed help to prevent rather than to succour destitution were good, the Bill was too much of a patchwork to receive much support. The opposition was great and Pitt did not even defend his Bill; nothing was done.

He did, however, do something to ease the pressure of the **LAW OF SETTLEMENT**. In 1795 it was made illegal to remove a person until he became actually chargeable to the parish, and to do so in any case, if he was dangerously ill! The change made movement easier since a parish could no longer turn out a new-comer. He still, of course, was liable to be removed, if he fell out of work long enough to become destitute. An attempt in 1800 to allow temporary help from his adopted parish was defeated.

6. One of the most oppressive measures of the times was the **STAMP DUTY on newspapers and pamphlets**. In 1819 a duty of *4d.* on every paper or pamphlet costing less than *6d.* aimed at muzzling the champions of the poor. It did not entirely succeed, for we find the poor combining to read even *7d.* journals, but it undoubtedly made the spread of movements in favour of reform more difficult.

**Administrative Action.** In government by oligarchy, such as that of England after the Revolution of 1688, the administration of the laws is apt to be even more oppressive than the laws themselves, and this, for reasons we shall see later, was especially so from 1789 to 1850.

During our period the **HABEAS CORPUS ACT** was suspended from 1794 to 1802, again in 1816-17, and the rulers were free to arrest and imprison for years any one they found in inconvenient opposition.

The **TREATMENT OF ASSEMBLIES**, peaceable and riotous, was of a kind almost unbelievable by twentieth-century people before the Great War. There was some excuse for this in the inadequate police arrangements, which belonged to a long-past

<sup>1</sup> See p. 328.



era. Our blue-coated constables are the creation of a later time; up to 1829 the only authority lay in a handful of Dogberrys supported by a Justice of the Peace and helped by a number of rascals who were quite as often criminals as detectives of



RECRUITING FOR THE ARMY. Cartoon by Henry Bunbury (1750-1811).

crime. In theory the whole countryside, the 'posse comitatus', could be called out at need. At best a clumsy instrument, it had long been entirely useless. Some districts had no magistrates at all. Such being the police, the authorities naturally turned to the army, and it was none too trustworthy. Billeted out among the people, drawn as Wellington said from the scum

of the earth, the soldiers were as likely as not to side with the



## PETERLOO.

See! see! where freedom's noblest en-  
 pion stands,  
 Shout! shout! illustrious patriot band,  
 Here grateful millions their generous  
 tribute bring,  
 And shouts for freedom make the welkin  
 ring,  
 While fell corruption and her hellish crew  
 The blood-stained trophies gained at  
 Peterloo.

Soon shall fair freedom's sons their right  
 regain,  
 Soon shall all Europe join the hallowed  
 strain,  
 Of Liberty and Freedom, Equal Rights  
 and Laws,  
 Heaven's choicest blessing crown this  
 glorious cause,  
 While meanly tyrants, crawling minions,  
 too,  
 Tremble at their seats performed on  
 Peterloo.

Britons be firm assert your rights, be bold  
 Perish like heroes not like slaves be sold,  
 Firmly unite, bid millions be free,  
 Will to your children glorious liberty,  
 While cowards—despots long may keep  
 in view,  
 And silent contemplate, the deeds on  
 Peterloo.

rioters. It was for this reason that Pitt introduced in the early days of the French war the system of barracks, in order to detach the army from the intimacies of civil life. In vain Fox objected that a military police was the worst kind of police; the ruling class cared only to secure themselves. Even in barracks the army proved very unreliable, and regiments were constantly moved away from areas in which their loyalty was being corrupted. The militia, drawn from the general body of the nation, was no more to be trusted, and in food riots was apt to side with the mob. There was, however, one force that the authorities could trust, the volunteer cavalry known as the 'Yeomanry'. They were drawn from the well-to-do classes and became the most hated men of their day. In one case in 1809 the Government even used the German Legion to suppress a revolt of the militia and to overawe the crowd at the public floggings that followed.

What it meant to revolt against starvation in the early nineteenth century may be illustrated by the

treatment meted out on four specific occasions. After the Luddite disturbances in Yorkshire in 1812 the general in

charge of the soldiers there adopted the plan of continually moving small bodies of soldiers about at night, calling people up in the small hours to house and feed them. At the same time the magistrates were given power to search for arms and to disperse assemblies without the formality of reading the Riot Act.



Satirical cartoon of 1819.

The story of Peterloo is one of the best known in our social history. In 1819 there was great unrest; prices were high, wages low, and there was a strong agitation on foot for a reform of the franchise. Lancashire Reformers announced a meeting in St. Peter's Fields, Manchester, and a crowd of 60,000 assembled. The people were in their Sunday clothes, about a third of them were women, and there were many children. The promoters of the meeting took every possible precaution to ensure that order should be kept, and the chief speaker, Henry Hunt, offered him-

self the night before to the magistrate as hostage for the crowd's good behaviour. But no sooner had he begun to speak than the Yeomanry dashed forward waving their swords. The crowd made way for them, and Hunt was arrested. Suddenly the Yeomanry turned, hitting wildly at the massed people. As a result of the charge that followed eleven people died, and over 400 were wounded. The Government, instead of calling the magistrates to account for unjustified abuse of their powers, sent their thanks, and Hunt and three others were imprisoned. Fortunately, the Government in this case overreached itself, *The Times* reported the actual facts, and the middle classes, revolted by such careless oppression, rallied to the ranks of reform.

In 1830 came the last revolt of the agricultural worker. The labourers had by that date reached perhaps the lowest level of degradation, and in the summer an outbreak of arson and destruction appeared in Kent. The main attack was on threshing machines, which took from the labourer his principal winter work, but ricks were fired in vengeance on certain farmers. The Government sent soldiers and field-pieces, and arrested on suspicion in the hope of securing information. They were not very successful, though they did not scruple to bully a girl of ten for this purpose. By November the disturbances had spread to Sussex, though here the revolt was organized peaceably. The village rose *en masse* and presented its demands to the farmers, who, under threats of loss of ricks and barns, complied with them. Half a crown a day wages seems to have been the chief request. In these two counties there was considerable sympathy with the revolt, and some of the magistrates urged that wages should be raised, when in their opinion all riot would cease. No local forces could be trusted, and the Government was inundated with demands for troops. After November the revolt spread to Berkshire, Hampshire, and Wiltshire. Here the demand was for 2s. a day, for wages in these counties were as low as 7s. and 6s. a week. The Hampshire rising was marked by the destruction of two workhouses.

At first the farmers adopted a conciliatory attitude, but this did not last long ; the landlords were terrified and sharp measures were taken. Wholesale arrests were made, and the revolt collapsed. Meanwhile it had spread to Dorset and Gloucestershire, and by the New Year to Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. There were sporadic outbreaks in other counties, and letters from the hypothetical 'Captain Swing' reached Yorkshire. But Melbourne had no sympathy with weak-minded magistrates, who thought there was something to be said for a labourer who asked for more than a starvation wage, and Special Commissions were appointed to try the hundreds that, by Christmas, were crowding the jails. The temper of the judges may be gathered from their charges to the grand juries. Most of them were assured that there was little if any distress, that the gentlemen of England were always anxious to lighten the burdens of the poor, that capital and industry must be protected at all cost, and the attacks on clergy and tithes were shocking to all men of Christian sentiment. Every effort was made to induce the men to betray their comrades, with only limited success. Three hundred men were tried at Winchester ; of these 101 were condemned to death and two actually executed, one a boy of nineteen, the others transported for life. Of the rest, 36 were transported, 65 imprisoned with hard labour, and 67 acquitted. In Wiltshire 154 men and boys were transported, and transportation for whatever period meant exile for life in most cases, and separation as irrevocable as death from wife and children and kinsfolk. Both in Hampshire and Wiltshire all evidence as to poverty and distress was ruled out of order, and the individual prisoner's fate depended largely on his reputation with the gentry. Well-known poachers or men with influence among their fellows were best at the antipodes. In Dorset the heavy sentences were less numerous ; only twelve were transported. *The Times* correspondent was of opinion that it was hardly worth while to go to the expense of a Special Commission for such poor results. The Commission in Berkshire and Buckingham showed less of the spirit of Judge Jeffreys, and the country gentry there

seem to have been more humane and less frightened. At Reading three men were condemned to death, but the lives of two were saved by the roused public opinion of the county; 56 were transported and 36 sent to prison. Altogether for riots, in which not a single person was killed or seriously wounded, the Government exacted a penalty of nine lives, and the transportation of over 450 men and boys. 'The shadow of this vengeance still darkens the minds of old men and women in the villages of Wiltshire, and eighty years have been too short a time to blot out its train of desolating memories.'<sup>1</sup> It is one of the tragedies of the human story that the Government responsible for what one can only call these atrocities was that which was returned to pass the great Reform Bill, and contained the honoured names of Grey and Holland. The main responsibility lies on Lord Melbourne, who was Home Secretary.

But when the Government set out to find another more important victim, it burnt its fingers rather badly. The life story of William Cobbett cannot be fully told here, though its romance is almost equal to its importance.

He was born at Farnham in Surrey in 1762 and spent seven years in the army, mostly in Nova Scotia, rising speedily to the rank of sergeant-major. He left in 1791 with a profound contempt for his superior officers and a determination to show up the peculation of the quartermaster. He, however, failed to do so, and in 1792 went to the United States. Eight years later he returned to England and set up as a bookseller and stationer in Pall Mall. In 1802 he issued the first number of the *Political Register*, beginning as an ultra-Tory, but after 1806 he changed right over to ultra-Radicalism. With seven years' army experience behind him, in 1810 he made a bitter attack on the Government for their brutal quelling of a mutiny in the militia, and won for himself two years' imprisonment and a fine of £1,000. After this his influence with the working classes became enormous and increasing, and on the suspension of Habeas Corpus in 1817 he sought safety in America for two years. In 1816 he evaded

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, p. 284.

## MR. COBBETT'S EMIGRATION

Mr. Cobbett sailed from Liverpool, for New York, in the Importer, Capt. Hall, on Friday last. He had been here for several preceding days; not skulking, as some of his political opponents have insinuated, but showing himself, and conversing publicly to any person who wished to be introduced to him. He was accompanied by his two sons, who are said to be destined for the American bar. When Mr. Cobbett attended at the Custom-house, to be passed, as it is technically termed, Mr. Casey was with him; and when the question was put to him, whether Mr. Cobbett had any thing saleable about him, Mr. Casey replied, "Oh, yes, Sir! he bears about him his mind; had he been disposed to sell that, he need not have left this country for another."

### MR. COBBETT'S LETTER.

TO THE PUBLIC.

*Liverpool, March 26, 1817.*—My departure for America will surprize nobody, but those who do not reflect. A full and explicit statement of my reasons will appear in a few days, probably on the 5th of April. In the meanwhile, I think it necessary for me to make known, that I have fully empowered a person of respectability to manage and settle all my affairs in England. I owe my Countrymen most sincere regard, which I shall always entertain for them in a higher degree than towards any other People upon earth. I carry nothing from my Country but my wife and my children, and, surely, they are my own, at any rate. I shall always love England better than any other Country; I will never become a subject or citizen of any other State—but, I and mine were not born under a Government having the absolute power to imprison us at its pleasure, and, if we can avoid it, we will neither live nor die under such an order of things.—If I have not taken leave of numerous friends in London and in the Country, it was because I should have been made unhappy by their importunities and the expressions of their sorrow. I make an enormous sacrifice of property and of feeling; but, when my heart feels the tugs of friendship, and of all the interesting objects in Hampshire, it is reconciled to the loss by the thought that I can enjoy them only during the pleasure of a Secretary of State. When this order of things shall cease to exist, then shall I again see England.

WM COBBETT.

From *The Liverpool Mercury*, April 4, 1817

the stamp duty, which put the price of his paper above the purse of the workers, by issuing an unstamped edition from which all news items were deleted. The Government answered by the Newspaper Stamp Duty of 1819. This Act for a time killed his sales, and in 1820 Cobbett was bankrupt. None the less his political influence during the next ten years was tremendous on the side of reform. He published several books of enduring value, especially his *Rural Rides*, letters written during journeys taken between 1820 and 1826.

Such was the man whom in an evil moment for itself Grey's Government decided in 1831 to prosecute for his articles in the *Political Register* on the recent revolt. Cobbett triumphantly turned the attack on him into one by him on his prosecutors, and when the jury disagreed and he was free, the ministers decided that it was safer in future to leave him alone. Next year he entered Parliament as member for Oldham, and in 1835 he died. One of the most inconsistent of men, there was only one thing certain about William Cobbett, he was always to be found championing the under-dog, and this master of invective struck mighty blows. Cobbett takes rank among the main forces that made the best side of Victorian England, its mixture of feudal sentiment and democratic theory, its philanthropy facing its commercialism, its desperate lack of logic and well-meaning refusal to see inconvenient facts. A big blundering kindly fellow who wanted to see all men comfortable; who hated fiercely the tyrant when he recognized him, but without much insight into the real causes of the tyranny; such was Cobbett and such, in certain aspects, was the England that came after him, the England of Dickens, of Kingsley, of Disraeli in his rôle of social reformer, of Florence Nightingale, and of at least one survival into the twentieth century.

No doubt such vengeance as that described above did not shock a generation, whose PENAL CODE was among the most barbarous in history, as it shocks their descendants. During the latter part of the eighteenth century Parliament had added the death penalty to hundreds of fresh offences, until almost



every crime could be thus punished at the discretion of the judge. Petty theft carried a capital sentence, and in 1810 and again in 1813 an attempt to abolish this was carried by Romilly in the Commons but thrown out in the Lords, with the help of seven bishops. The ruling class preferred to believe that transportation was regarded by the poor as a pleasant 'migration to a milder climate'. The convict was leased to the Australian farmers practically as a slave, and 'idleness and insolence of expression or even of looks, anything betraying the insurgent spirit, subjects him to the chain gang, or the triangle, or to hard labour on the roads'.<sup>1</sup> A worse fate still could overtake the convict, for he might be condemned not merely to transportation but to a penal settlement.

'Not a single feature that can revolt and stupify the imagination is wanting to the picture. Children of ten committing suicide, men murdering each other by compact as an escape from a hell they could no longer bear, prisoners receiving a death sentence with ecstasies of delight, punishments inflicted that are indistinguishable from torture, men stealing into the parched bush in groups, in the horrible hope that one or two of them might make their way to freedom by devouring their comrades. An atmosphere in which the last glimmer of self-respect and human feeling was extinguished by incessant and degrading cruelty.'<sup>2</sup>

The victims of these brutal laws were for the most part illiterate adults and often mere children. In 1831 the governor of a prison said he had under his charge a boy of ten who had been imprisoned eight times; in 1813 two brothers aged twelve and ten were transported for seven years for stealing some linen; in 1800 a child of ten described by the judge as 'wearing a pinafore' was condemned to death for stealing notes and the sentence commuted to transportation for fourteen years. Such sentences on children were frequent, and in 1814 a boy of fourteen was hanged for stealing. 'A woman whose husband had been transported for felony committed the same felony in the hope

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence on the Subject of Secondary Punishments*, 1834, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, p. 182.

of joining him in exile, but the judge thought it necessary to make an example and hanged her instead.'<sup>1</sup>

The man indicted for a felony, and most crimes were felonies, was denied the right to engage a barrister to speak in his defence. His counsel could only cross-examine witnesses, any plea in the prisoner's favour must be made by himself. Such a situation would be fatal to nine out of ten men to-day; at a time when few could read or write the accused was doomed from the first.

#### OLD BAILEY, SEPT. 24.

The following Prisoners received sentence of death for the following offences:

John Griffiths for horse-stealing.

Elizabeth Hill for stealing goods to the value of 2l 15s. privately in a shop.

Sarah Dancer for the same offence.

Thomas Pearson for a robbery in an open field near the King's highway.

John Spencer for sheep-stealing.

Erick Hanson Falk for forgery.

John Lewis for unlawfully assembling with twenty other persons and more, to the disturbance of the public peace, and beginning to demolish and to pull down a dwelling-house.

Thomas H. H. for a burglary.

Henry H. for the same offence.

Richard Smith for stealing goods of the value of 40s. and upwards, in a dwelling-house, &c.

William Tooke for the same offence.

'Petty theft carried a capital sentence.' Newspaper cutting of the nineties.

Of all the administrative iniquities of the time none was worse than the constant USE OF SPIES. At all times of popular excitement they were extensively used, they were well paid, and there is now little doubt that they invented or instigated most of the crimes they denounced. The local magistrates were credulous beyond bounds, and the Home Office, especially under Sidmouth, saw in every half-starved striker a potential Jacobin. From 1801 till the arrival of Peel at the Home Office, there was no check to their activities. 'It is beyond dispute that the Government spies helped to create the plots which they pre-

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Town Labourer*, p. 76.



tended to discover, and that many of the plots of which information was given never existed in fact.<sup>1</sup>

We have spoken of the famine prices during the period in 1796, in 1800-1, 1812, and 1817, and for these the war and foreign policy of the Government were largely responsible. From the moment that England plunged into war with the French revolutionaries, prices were bound to rise, and as the fighting spread throughout Europe England's markets and her sources of supply shut down one after another. When, in 1806, Napoleon tried to kill British trade by closing against it the ports of Europe, and England replied with the ORDERS IN COUNCIL, his object was for a time achieved. For five years trade languished, and but for the high farming of the time we might have gone down in the struggle of endurance. As it was, Europe, starved of all the products of English factories (even the French armies were clothed by British goods smuggled across), revolted first, and in a desperate attempt to enforce his blockade Napoleon threw away his Empire at Moscow. Though we paid by a war with the United States, the Orders in Council had fulfilled their object, at what cost of human suffering cannot now be estimated.

The effect of the cessation of the war was terrible. The Government, which had been spending fifty millions a year to keep up the army, suddenly ceased doing so, and the disbanded men, instead of forming an equivalent market, joined the unemployed and competed for such work as was going. Europe in 1815, as in 1919, was too poor to buy, and when it began to revive wanted raw material rather than manufactured goods. The years from 1815 to 1834 were times of terrible stress.

**The Mind of the Governing Classes.** The facts told in the preceding pages call for some explanation. Who were these rulers who arrogated to themselves the sole decision as to the nation's welfare, and how came they in practice so to play the tyrant? The rulers of England in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century were the landowning aristocrats. 'In England there was no institution, central or local, which the

<sup>1</sup> Chapman, *The Lancashire Cotton Industry*, p. 189.

aristocracy did not control.<sup>1</sup> Out of 513 English and Welsh members in 1832 it is true that 415 represented cities and

#### BOROUGH OF ILCHESTER.

Mr. BENNET said, that he was instructed to present a petition from the rector, churchwardens, overseers, and some of the principal inhabitants of the borough of Ilchester, complaining of a very serious grievance. No doubt some gentlemen were present on the opposite side of the house, who would be able to contradict some of the main facts contained in the petition, and he hoped for the honour of human nature that they could be disproved. The house was aware that Ilchester returned two members to Parliament; it was a patronised place, or in other words, if he might be permitted to use them, it was the property of a particular family. It appeared from the petition, though he did not vouch for the correctness of the statements it contained, that the proprietor thought a small number of constituents more advantageous, and to accomplish this object he had pulled down a number of houses, by which about 100 families had been driven from their homes, and were received into a sort of temporary poor-house, where they were sheltered for a time, yet only 18 or 20 of them had been paupers, the rest maintaining themselves by honest industry. Notice however was given, in consequence of prevailing political dissensions, that these unhappy families would be deprived even of that shelter; the parish resisted, and an ejectment being brought, they were finally turned out: thus 163 men, women, and children, from extreme infancy to extreme age, had been driven into the open streets in the most inclement season of the year;

#### BARNSTAPLE ELECTION.

Lord CLIVE moved, that the report of the committee on the election for Barnstaple be taken into further consideration. The noble lord read the two special resolutions to which the committee, of which he sat as Chairman, had come, and supported them by facts detailed in the evidence. These two resolutions were—

“1. That it appears to this committee that Sir Manasseh Masseh Lopes, bart., was by his agents guilty of bribery and treating, at the last election for the borough of Barnstaple, and is thereby incapacitated to serve in Parliament at such election.”

“2. That it appears by evidence before this committee that such a general system of corruption was practised at the last election for the said borough of Barnstaple, as to render it incumbent on the committee to submit the same to the most serious consideration of the house, in order that such proceedings may be instituted thereon as the house in its wisdom may think proper to adopt.”

The testimony of the witnesses examined before the committee, he said, completely justified these resolutions. Of the number of resident voters, which did not much exceed 300, 66 had received bribes from Sir M. M. Lopes, who had expended 3,000*l.* at the last election, in bribery and treating, through a banker, Mr. J. Gribble, who was examined by the committee. The out voters, who amounted to about 140, received 20*l.* a-piece; the resident electors 5*l.* Mr. Gribble stated, that the London voters in Sir M. Lopes's interest claimed and received 2*l.* more a-piece, because Mr. Ommaney's said they had been so paid.

From *The Times* of April 3, 1819.

boroughs, but those boroughs were almost all in the hands of big landowners. By various interpretations of old franchises, by limitations either of area or of numbers, the freemen of most

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, p. 7.

boroughs were few in number, and easily controlled by a wealthy patron. If necessary new freemen were admitted in numbers to swamp an election, and if residence was necessary, magnates like Lord Lonsdale, who moved a colony of Cumberland miners into Haslemere, could easily secure it. That 'pocket boroughs' were a valuable possession is shown by the fact that Pitt proposed to compensate the patrons of those that were disfranchised. The anomalies were absurd. The members for Rye and Dunwich represented six and fourteen electors respectively. Manchester and Birmingham had no representative. The one elector of Old Sarum was qualified by the ownership of a ploughed field. In 1710 an Act of Parliament had limited members to those owning land worth either £600 or £300 per annum.

But it was not only in Parliament that the aristocracy were dominant. The old manor courts had gone with the common-fields, and all county and parish affairs were in the hands of the Justices of the Peace, the High Sheriff, and the Lord-Lieutenant. These were county gentlemen and clergy, and their power was utterly uncontrolled. Squire Western's estimate of his own powers may be remembered, but, not in fiction but in actual fact, in 1822 the Duke of Buckingham tried and convicted a man for coursing on his own estate; the trial was held in his Grace's kitchen, and the witnesses were his Grace's gamekeepers.

Such being their power, what of their ideas of using it? The arrogance of the Whig aristocracy of the eighteenth century displayed in the literature and the records of the time is almost incredible. With the advent of the Hanoverian monarchs went all respect for the Crown, for the princes of the House of Brunswick might be royal but were certainly not gentlemen, and the great Whig houses were left with none to check them. Unlike the hangers-on at the Court of Versailles, the English aristocrat was a territorial magnate holding supreme power in his little world, and one who, together with a small coterie of his own class, decided the destinies of nations. To them the poor man was of another race, destitute for the most part of all the virtues and only tolerable as a submissive minister to the leisured ease

of his superiors. A few quotations from the writings of the time will show this best.

When the commons are enclosed 'the labourers will work every day in the year, their children will be put out to labour early', and 'that subordination of the lower ranks of society which in the present time is so much wanted would be thereby



OLD SARUM. 'The one elector was qualified by the ownership of a ploughed field.'

considerably secured' (Report on Shropshire, by J. Bishton, to the Board of Agriculture, 1794).

'All experience proves that in the lower orders the deterioration of morals increases with the quantity of unemployed time of which they have command.'<sup>1</sup>

'It is to high wages that many of the criminal habits so often ascribed to the collier may in part be ascribed. To economy he is an utter stranger' (Rev. Thomas Gisborne in 1798,<sup>2</sup> when wages were 16s. a week at most and prices at war level).

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from 'An Enquiry into the Principle and Tendency of the Bill for imposing certain restrictions on Cotton Factories, 1818, by Hutchins and Harrison in *A History of Factory Legislation*, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *Reports of the London Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor*, vol. i, p. 170.

When the framework knitters were earning 14s. a week for a twelve- or thirteen-hour day, this is the account of their vile habits, given by a parson-magistrate, the Rev. J. T. Becker :

' Abundance thus rapidly acquired by those who were ignorant of its proper application hastened the progress of luxury and licentiousness and the lower orders were almost universally corrupted by profusion and depravity scarcely to be credited by those who are strangers to our district. Among the men the discussion of politics, the destruction of game, or the dissipation of the ale houses was substituted for the duties of their occupation during the former part of the week, and in the remaining three or four days a sufficiency was earned for defraying current expenses.'<sup>1</sup>

The depopulation of the countryside was attributed, not to enclosures, but to the vanity and pleasure-seeking of the rural population ; the miserable living of some hundreds of squatters on the waste<sup>2</sup> was made a pretext for condemning all small holdings. Even what we should now regard as a virtue, the loyalty of the workers to each other, 'seemed to the upper and middle classes little short of a crime'.

The attitude of the controlling classes towards the children of the 'lower orders' has been sufficiently exemplified in the story of the fight for factory legislation and for the chimney-sweeps. To it may be added the claim of a Mr. Tufnell, one of the Factory Commissioners of 1833, that children working at a mule as piecers for twelve hours a day were doing nothing three-quarters of every minute, since they then were merely watching the mules recede, hence they really only worked three hours a day, or if they minded two mules they worked six hours.<sup>2</sup>

There was, however, another factor besides native arrogance and selfishness that encouraged a tyrannical attitude among the authorities. It is difficult for us now to realize the panic produced in England by the progress of the French Revolution.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the Home Office Papers 42. 120 in *The Skilled Labourer*, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 272.





*THE SMITHFIELD PARLIAMENT: is Universal Suffrage - the New Speaker addressing the Members.*

A satirical cartoon of 1819, a reply to the resolutions in favour of Universal Suffrage which were being passed by the Reform party all over the country

We have seen lately something of such terror in the attitude of a section of our people to the revolution in Russia. But Russia is not just across the Channel, and the world is a hundred years nearer democracy than it was in 1793. To the large majority of educated English the September massacres in France sounded the trump of doom to all that was fine and beautiful in existence, and like most men in a panic their one idea was force, war to the death against the violators of law and order, repression to the uttermost of the smallest echo at home of the continental shout of liberty. From that moment in the eyes of all magistrates and lawgivers the labouring class were not fellow Englishmen who looked to them for justice, but potential rebels to be relentlessly crushed. 'Policing the poor' was the main work of the authorities. But for the horror, as it seemed to them, across the Channel, it is probable some effort might have been made to mitigate the misery of the transition from hand-work to machinery. As it was the authorities were afraid that any attempt in this direction would open the floodgates for the terrible cry, 'Liberty, Fraternity, Equality', and like all men under the influence of terror they became cruel. It was this terror of anarchy that made a man like Wilberforce rank himself on the side of oppression and smugly justify in the name of his religion cruelties that he deemed unavoidable without great risk. He preferred that a dozen innocent should suffer rather than one possible rebel escape, and he would throw the whole weight of his wealth and reputation into the effort to ruin some wretched bookseller who had sold a copy of Paine's *Age of Reason*. Thus he supported keenly the Combination Laws, resisted every effort to secure fair trials for suspects, and upheld Sidmouth in his use of spies and agents provocateurs.

There were, however, a few men in exalted positions for whom no after excesses could dim the glorious light of the early years of the new France :

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
And to be young was very heaven. |

Wordsworth might forget, but Fox and Sheridan, Grey and

Holland, Romilly and Whitbread kept the dim light burning, and fought again and again the cause of the oppressed. The reaction that followed the terror and lived on through the long years of war passed away at last; the light welcomed by dissolute Fox and frivolous Sheridan, though rejected by pious Wilberforce and patriot Pitt, proved to be no false dawn—the day of the people had risen.

The new wealth that its owners were so afraid of losing was certainly worth keeping. Colossal fortunes were made by men utterly unused either to luxury or to power, and to men so caught in the new whirlwind it was difficult to believe that their own good fortune was not also the good fortune of the nation. It is not altogether incomprehensible that they should come to believe that everything that stood between them and the faster piling up of wealth, whether it were small cottagers or highly paid workmen, was a handicap on the country. What is a little strange is, that they should have induced almost the entire nation to believe it too.



Cartoon of Fox as the demagogue.

Such being the view held by the majority of the rich and middle class of those on whose exertions their leisure and comfort depended, it is not surprising that while throughout Europe there was a wave of enthusiasm for the education of all classes, England steadily opposed any change. The new aggregations of people, miscalled towns, had absolutely no provision for education, and some 50 per cent. of the population of Lancashire and Cheshire could not sign their own names. In 1807 Whitbread tried to get Parliament to establish elementary schools through-

out England. The project was killed by a combination of those who feared that an educated working-class would refuse to be properly subordinate, with Churchmen, who objected to any one having anything to do with education but themselves. Something was, however, effected in 1808 by the Evangelicals and the Nonconformists, and in 1811 by the Church, and the British and Foreign Schools Society and the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church were founded at these dates. In 1816 Brougham, who throughout his life advocated universal rate-paid education, got a Commission appointed to look into charitable endowments, and so rescued for education funds that had nearly been lost.

Such education as the poor were allowed was of the most meagre description. Hannah More taught reading but not writing, and she wished them to be trained 'in habits of industry and piety'. Mrs. Trimmer asked 'that the lower sort of children might be so far civilized as not to be disgusting'.<sup>1</sup>

The great specific of the age for the sorrows of the poor was charity, and there was truly a great deal of it. Some of it, like that of John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, was the Pauline kind which beareth all things; much of it was not. The rich undoubtedly accepted the distribution of some of their superfluity among their neighbours as a duty incumbent on their position, for which they exacted full payment in gratitude and servility.

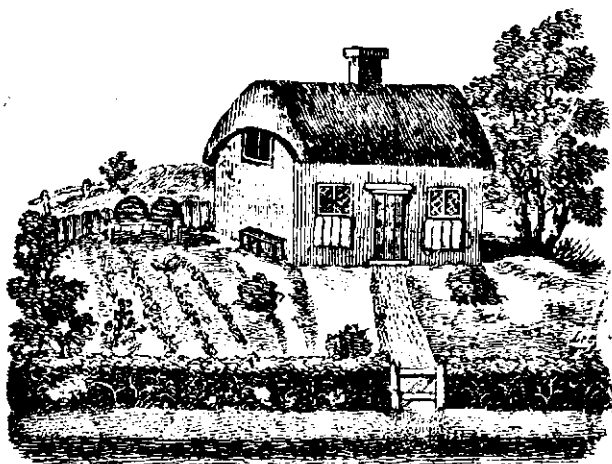
The attitude of a really high-principled woman of the time is best judged in her own words. To the women of Shipham, a mining village in the Mendips, thus spoke in a time of famine (1801) Hannah More, philanthropist and writer of moral stories :

'I wish you to understand also that you are not the only sufferers. You have indeed borne your share and a very hard one it has been in the late difficulties; but it has fallen in some degree on all ranks, nor would the gentry have been able to afford such large supplies to the distresses of the poor, had they not denied themselves, for your sakes, many indulgences to which their fortune at other times entitled them. We trust the

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Town Labourer*, p. 58.

AN  
A C C O U N T  
OF A  
COTTAGE AND GARDEN,  
NEAR TADCASTER.  
WITH  
OBSERVATIONS  
UPON LABOURERS HAVING FREEHOLD COTTAGES  
AND GARDENS,  
AND UPON A PLAN FOR SUPPLYING COTTAGERS  
WITH COWS.

PRINTED AT THE DESIRE OF THE SOCIETY  
FOR BETTERING THE CONDITION, AND  
INCREASING THE COMFORTS OF THE POOR.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. BECKET, BOOKSELLER, PALL-MALL  
1797.

PRICE ONE SHILLING A DOZEN.

*'The great specific of the age for the sorrows of the poor was charity'*

poor in general, especially those that are well-instructed, have received what has been done for them as a matter of favour not of right—if so, the same kindness will, I doubt not, always be extended to them, whenever it shall please God so to afflict the land.’<sup>1</sup>

By this time some of you will be asking how it was that England was regarded on the Continent as the home of liberty, and what did the great eighteenth-century orators, like Burke, mean when they praised the English constitution as the keystone of the arch of freedom. Certainly no one could say that the majority of Englishmen between 1750 and 1830 enjoyed any freedom at all. When Burke and Pitt and the rest talked of free Englishmen, they meant educated Englishmen, or at least moneyed Englishmen. Of them it was magnificently true that they were free to do and say things that in any other country in Europe would have sent them to long imprisonment. The seventeenth century secured for men of the upper classes almost complete protection from tyranny. Byron and Shelley might shock their public with every kind of political audacity, might express views not out of place in fifth-century Athens, no one thought of prosecuting them; but a magistrate in 1817 could seize and flog two men for distributing Cobbett’s pamphlets, and the Vagrancy Laws could be twisted so as to rid the countryside of any poor man objectionable to the authorities.

In the Middle Ages and still on into the seventeenth century there was considerable freedom in the incorporated boroughs. By 1800 there was little left. The management had fallen into the hands of a remnant dominated by some great landowner. The working-man was hardly ever a freeman, and so had no vote in borough affairs. The shipwrights of Liverpool were a notable exception, and as a result were able successfully to resist for a long time the degradation of their standard of life. The whole control was usually in the hands of a corrupt clique, who made much money out of their position. Unincorporated towns, such as was Manchester, were governed by the agent of the lord of the manor. Civil life was dead throughout most of the land.

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Town Labourer*, p. 229.

To sum up we may say that the eighteenth century in England was the time of the lowest moral standard in our history, when all cruelties were justified by the plea that property must be protected. The whole economic outlook of the age is summed up by a modern writer: 'Our ancestors passed laws to establish just



ENGLISH LIBERTY. Cartoon by William Heath, 1831.

prices; their successors legislated to secure reasonable profits.<sup>1</sup>

**The Church and Religion.** <sup>2</sup> But in any attempt to tell the story of the English race some attention must be paid to the part played by religion. What had happened to the Church since we looked at it last? The political history of the two centuries that succeeded the Reformation is soaked with religious and ecclesiastical questions, but on the economic side there is little to note. The parochial organization had remained unchanged; on the surface things had not altered much since

<sup>1</sup> Prothero, *English Farming*, p. 271.

Elizabeth's time. Tithe was still paid, though in at least a fourth of the parishes it went to laymen, for the dissolution of the monasteries had handed over much of the great tithes to their lay successors. There was considerable talk of the commutation of tithes, for payment in corn and other produce was a great nuisance to the farmer and not always convenient to the titheholder, and in some of the Enclosure Acts land was attached to the living in lieu of tithes. Not till 1836 was any general commutation effected. Another unsatisfactory condition in the Church of the eighteenth century was the number of pluralities and absentee vicars and even bishops. Bishop Watson of Llandaff never lived in his diocese during the whole thirty-four years he was its spiritual pastor. The bishops, however, might claim to be in the tradition of the Middle Ages, feudal lords with some small spiritual duties; the parish priests of the eighteenth century could make no such claim. The pre-Reformation village priest was usually a peasant, and lived with and for his poorer parishioners. He did not always rise to his ideal, and Chaucer's 'parson' may have been above the average, but the rector or vicar of the eighteenth century looked not to the poor but to the rich. At best he was a cultured gentleman whose philosophy bore the stamp of Greece and Rome rather than of Nazareth; at worst he was a drunken fox-hunter or a grovelling hanger-on of the rich. As spiritual guides there is not much to choose between a Henry Tilney, a Mr. Collins, and a Blifil. But whatever their moral or spiritual value, any effective influence was prevented by continual absence; 332 men drew the revenues of 1,496 parishes, and 500 more those of 1,524. Clergy of rank held four or five livings, among them Wellington's brother, who was rector of three parishes and Prebendary of Durham. 'In 1812 out of 10,000 incumbents nearly 6,000 were non-resident.'<sup>1</sup> True they did not leave the parishes entirely destitute, and curates at salaries of £40-£60 a year performed some of the most urgent duties, though they too stayed away when they could. But even a curate cultivated the

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, p. 197.



outlook of the rich, for in the squire lay his only hope of preferment.

But if the spiritual life of the Church was almost extinct there were two movements, one within and one without it, that made for revival. The period of the Industrial Revolution was also that of the Evangelical Church and the Methodist move-



THE PLURALIST.

'Another unsatisfactory condition was the number of pluralities and absentee vicars.' Cartoon of the eighteenth century.

ments. Both had certain economic reactions that we must note. These two revolts against the scepticism and indifference of the age were both based on the doctrines of Calvin, and presented alike the dual features of a fatalistic theory and the transfer of the centre of life to a future existence. Evangelicalism enabled men and women of the wealthy classes to view with complacency the unequal distribution of wealth and happiness, since everything was arranged by an all-wise Providence, who asked only of man an unquestioning acquiescence, while Methodism turned the eyes of the sweated worker towards a glorious future in

which the joys of heaven should compensate him for the misery of his earthly existence. Reformers, not without some excuse, denounced Methodism as a hindrance to their work, in that men drugged themselves with dreams of heaven so that they were indifferent to their state on earth. It would not be easy to under-estimate the effect of a creed that attributed the respective positions of 'the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate' to the decrees of the Deity, and made philanthropists more anxious to give a knowledge of Genesis than a fair wage to the starving poor. Most of us know survivals of the believers in this creed even now.

**Economic Theory.** But religious dogma was not left to itself to supply motives for maintaining the existing state. Such vast changes in the material conditions of a people were bound to stimulate inquiring minds to seek for the causes and to explain the astonishing phenomena. Out of the Industrial Revolution came Political Economy, 'the dismal science'.

We have seen that already by 1775 the break-down of the mercantilist system was evident, and the old Government and municipal restrictions had become a serious handicap on enterprise. All who had to do with industry or commerce were keenly aware that for them at least regulation had ceased to be an advantage. In 1776 one of the great books of the world was published, and it gave ample reasons why the old system should disappear.

ADAM SMITH (1723-90) was a Scottish Professor of Philosophy, whose mind had been turned to economics by contact with merchants at home and thinkers abroad. In 1776 he published the work that made him famous, *The Wealth of Nations*. Its full title is 'An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations'. His great achievement was to demonstrate that by division of labour had come all advance in civilization, and that by this division more production was effected, even though merchants and traders, for example, seemed to create no new things. Contrary to prevailing theory he held that foreign trade benefited both parties to it, not merely the one that sold most. His main thesis brings into the field of productive activity all

workers, whether by hand or brain, though, misled by the influence of the physiocrats,<sup>1</sup> he does not always see whither his general theory leads, and occasionally dubs as 'unproductive' those whose production is confined to non-material things, such as administrators, doctors, artists, &c.

He wrote before the industrial revolution, but even so his sympathy was strongly with the wage-earners, and he urges their claim to a larger part of the produce of their activities than a mere subsistence wage. He does, however, see a limit (in a possible scarcity of capital available) to the amount above a 'fodder basis' to which they may hope to attain. On the other hand, he attacks high profits, and has but a poor opinion of the commercial and industrial master-class. He definitely states that, while rent increases with productivity, in prosperous countries competition of capital keeps profits low. Hence he argues that the interest of the landlord and of the nation is usually identical, but that of the commercial class may be directly opposed to national welfare.

His second great demonstration was to show that all economic institutions had a 'natural' origin; they arose not from organization, but from the spontaneous action of millions of individuals, each obeying his instinct. And since in the eighteenth century everything that was 'natural' tended to be regarded as perfect, Smith was convinced that the great secret of economic welfare was to leave things alone. So left, each man, following his individual instinct, would work out the happiness of the collective whole. On this basis of spontaneity he showed, or thought he showed, that the market price of goods, if left to the free play of supply and demand, would always approximate to the 'natural price', i. e. to the cost of production. He admitted exceptions, but regarded them as few and unimportant. Population and the supply of money also tended thus to adapt themselves to supply and demand. Since this adaptability shows itself in every part of the economic field, he proceeds to ask, What is the driving instinct that forces men so to act individually as to

<sup>1</sup> A school of French thinkers in the eighteenth century, who held that the only occupation that produced an increase of wealth was agriculture. 'Labour applied anywhere except to land is sterile' (Le Trosne).

produce collective prosperity? He concludes that it is 'the natural effort of every individual to better his own condition'. Though this may not be the dominating factor in determining the conduct of every individual, it is so, he asserts, in the great common majority, however it may be mixed with other interests and passions. But while we nowadays, with 150 years more experience to examine, know that however 'natural' the individual greed of man, it can become collectively intolerable, Smith saw in its 'naturalness' the mark of a beneficent providence. Following this he sets out to prove that capital and industry if left to themselves will pour into the most desirable channels, though his tests of desirability would now be challenged. There was, however, a limit to his belief in the beneficence of the state of things existing in 1776. He applies his optimism merely to production, he makes no pretence of doing so to distribution. As a matter of fact distribution concerns him much less; the problems of the eighteenth century were concerned with the trammels on production and the swathing bands in which trade still functioned; not for another fifty years did the problems of distribution reach their acutest point.

The natural conclusion of his investigations is the complete freedom of trade and industry from all governmental interference. According to Smith the State has been almost invariably a muddler; if it manages land or industry there is a loss of productivity at once, for without personal interest nothing gets done. If it interferes by regulation it drives into wrong channels capital, which left to itself, would automatically find its way to more useful ones. This was his big attack on the mercantilist system, the practical result of his theory of *laissez-faire* (let alone). But it must be pointed out that he held that there were two essentials without which private enterprise and public weal would not be linked together. First, the entrepreneur must have a real personal interest; he must be neither idle supplier of capital nor salaried manager, and competition must be allowed to act freely to keep him within the limits of fair play. For joint-stock companies with sleeping shareholders Smith had no use, a modern 'combine' would have called forth

his deepest denunciation. The only joint-stock companies he could tolerate were banks, water companies, and such things as demanded too much capital for one or two men to supply. He confines the functions of the State to a minimum of defence and justice and a few communal objects such as streets, ports, harbours, postal organization, with possibly education and the Church when private enterprise fails to undertake them.



MALTHUS

It is easy to see how such a doctrine of intelligent selfishness would be welcomed by the possessing class. Ignoring Adam Smith's many reservations and exceptions, they claimed his authority for allowing full play to the new forces, and defended as enlightened self-interest all the short-sighted greed of the new adventurers. Every man they held must be free to use his powers and possessions as he pleased, though they ignored the claims of *laissez-faire* when the workers tried to exercise their enlightened self-interest by combining.

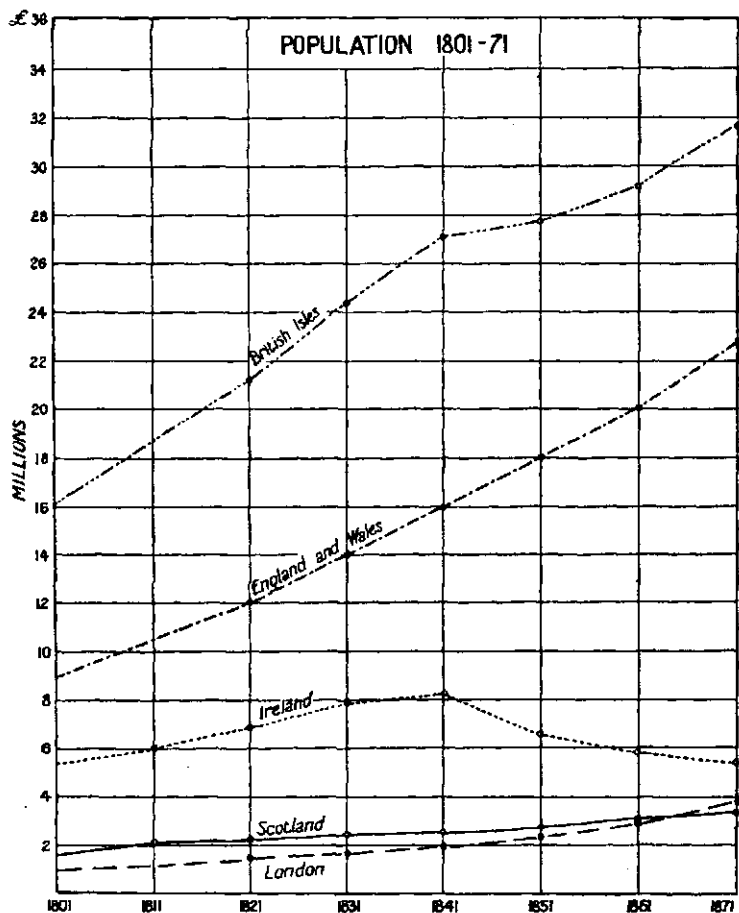
But if Adam Smith, perverted, supplied the exploiters of the

new wealth with theories to bolster up their robberies, the next thinker threw a still greater boulder in the path of justice. THOMAS ROBERT MALTHUS (1766-1834), a Cambridge Fellow, and later, Professor of History and Political Economy, published in 1798 a theory, which, if crudely interpreted, absolved every one from any duty to attempt to raise the standard of life of the wage-earner.

We have already noticed the enormous increase in population that marks the last years of the eighteenth century; Malthus thought he had made the discovery that while human beings multiplied in geometrical progression, the food supply could only be increased in an arithmetical one, and explained the phenomena before him as being the result of a law of nature that population tended always to outrun its food supply. Mercantilist thought approved a rapidly increasing population as supplying both the army and the factory. In the past, however, population had increased slowly, and now, when it was rising at an unheard-of rate, the people were obviously getting poorer. Malthus maintained that this was inevitable. There was a vicious circle, increasing wealth brought still more rapidly increasing population, too many people meant insufficient food and increased disease, hence wastage of people till the numbers sank below the food supply and then the circle began again. Obviously if this was the case, it was no use trying to raise the condition of the bulk of the population, since that only meant more children and less food per head. The only remedy he had to offer was postponement of marriage and small families.

Malthus was the earliest of the series of pessimist economists that gave to the science its title of 'dismal'. His outlook was dominated by the evil administration of the Poor Law, which, as we have seen, encouraged reckless marriages and the birth of illegitimate children. Malthus would have abolished all public assistance and greatly reduced private charity, for he saw no hope of limiting population but by the drastic threat of starvation. What he did not see was the fact, which a century of further experience has established, that individual well-being

is a far stronger check on reproduction than hopeless poverty can ever be. As the standard of life rises the individuals almost



automatically refuse to endanger it by reckless or early marriage, and the size of families in the twentieth century tends to decrease as we go up the social scale, and the birth-rate is highest in the slum and lowest in the professional classes. This is not an

unmixed blessing, but it removes the stultifying belief of Malthus that all effort to improve the status of the proletariat was doomed to failure since it would only result in larger families. For nearly a century this belief stood in the way of reform, and was regarded as a conclusive refutation of all arguments for communistic reforms. The 'prudential checks' which Malthus advocated but hardly hoped to see adopted, since man's passions seemed always stronger than their reason, have come without conscious effort by the mere working out of social forces.

DAVID RICARDO (1772-1823) was the son of a Jewish immigrant from Holland, of Portuguese extraction, and by profession a stockbroker. As a thinker on economic subjects he takes high rank. His outlook was that of the rising middle class of his time, bounded by the facts of his age. He assumed competition, enlightened self-interest, things as they were; he isolated economic considerations from all others, moral or philosophic, and proceeded to analyse the system before him. His great contribution was his doctrine of Rent. Rent he held to be the price paid to the landlord for the use of land better than the poorest cultivated. When there was more than enough land to go round people cultivated the best only and no rent was paid, each man took the piece he wanted. Presently all the best land was occupied and poorer had to be taken. Immediately the owner of the best land could charge a price for its use equal to the extra amount of produce that could be got out of it above that obtainable from the poorer, with the same labour and capital. When poorer land still was taken up, then the owner of the second lot could charge rent and the owner of the best put his up, the amount being always measured by the superior productivity of the land over that of the very poorest cultivated at all. Hence since high prices of food made it worth while to cultivate still poorer lands, therefore high prices sent up rents. So, in exact opposition to Adam Smith, he concluded that the interest of the nation at large was antagonistic to that of the landlords. On the other hand, low prices were good for the capitalist in industry, since then wages could be low. So capitalist



and nation generally had the same interest. Moral, repeal the Corn Laws. (Ricardo published his *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* in 1817.) So far Ricardo does not seem to be contributing to the 'dismal' side of his subject, but his other great theory was less happy. Accepting Malthus's theory of population and Adam Smith's *laissez-faire*, he believed that wages should be left to the settlement of free competition, and that their amount depended on the ratio between total capital of the country and the number of wage-earners, that is to say wages were fixed by factors over which no one had any control. Obviously, on this basis there was an unbridgeable gulf between the interests of capitalist and worker, for the more one had as profits, the less the other had as wages. At the same time he held that rising profits meant national progress, though such progress was bound to be at diminishing speed, while wages inevitably tend to approach the minimum sum on which man can live and perpetuate the race. This 'brazen law of wages', as Lassalle called it, has been the main point of socialistic attack on capitalist organization ever since, as being enough in itself alone to condemn it.

The third theory of Ricardo, and one which had great after influence, was that labour is the measure of value, that the relative values of things depend on the amount of labour that goes to their production.

Both with Malthus and Ricardo there were many modifications of the above general laws, but the dominant party seized eagerly on these theoretical justifications for what they wanted to do and ignored all reservations. Ricardo had considerable effect on the policy of labour, in the direction of political agitation to get rid of the oligarchy.

It is time, however, to look at a different school of thought. The apostles of *laissez-faire*, though they were victors in the fight and their victory dominated economics for nearly a century, did not lack an opposition. All through the period there were men who maintained, though from differing points of view, that economic life could not be divorced from moral considerations,

and that in practice *laissez-faire* meant the oppression of the weak. Such men were SPENCER, OGILVIE, and PAINE; the writers GODWIN, COLERIDGE, SOUTHEY, WORDSWORTH, and THELWALL; the reformers CHARLES HALL, OWEN, RAVENSTONE, and HODGSKIN; with SHELLEY to add the glamour of a great poet. Their story must be told very briefly. The early basis of their thought was the 'Law of Nature' as expounded by Locke and popularized by Rousseau. From this came the theory that in original society all men were free and equal, and next that land was held in common; finally, that labour was the real title to property. When to these theories was added Ricardo's apparent proof that wages and profits must be in inverse ratio, a body of doctrine, anti-capitalistic or SOCIALIST in form, was soon evolved. Its three chief points were: (a) private property should be abolished; (b) rent, profit, and interest to those who did not labour was a violation of natural law; (c) all reform must be in harmony with natural law. But natural law as a basis of life was somewhat discredited by the French Revolution—'Robespierre and Bonaparte destroyed the halo of Rousseau'<sup>1</sup>—and for some twenty years, till 1828, Bentham succeeded Locke as prophet. The new test was happiness, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and happiness they declared impossible under the capitalist system. Before 1817, however, we cannot find anything that we can call a school of thought. William Godwin was an anarchist rather than a communist, 'his ideal being an aggregate of free independent persons, mainly bent on the utmost development of their individuality'.<sup>2</sup> His influence on the Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey group was intense, but not lasting, and these great poets soon lapsed into 'fathers of Tory Democracy and Christian Social Reform'.<sup>3</sup> In 1792 Thomas Hardy, a Scottish shoemaker, founded the LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY, which, in spite of a vain attempt by Pitt in 1794 to convict its leaders of high treason, succeeded

<sup>1</sup> Beer, *History of British Socialism*, vol. i, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

for seven years in being a school of social reform for labour leaders all over England. In 1799 the passing of the Traitorous Correspondence Act, which made all communication between political societies illegal, brought it to an end. But its work was done.

The name, however, that stands out above all others, is that of ROBERT OWEN (1771-1858). The son of a Welsh saddler and ironmonger, and apprentice in a drapery shop, at twenty he was manager of one of Manchester's largest factories, then factory owner, and eventually, for over thirty years, partner in one of the largest manufacturing houses in Scotland. After fourteen years' experience he, in 1811, reconstructed his factory at New Lanark, on the basis of making the welfare of the employees the first consideration. He limited the hours, paid good wages, provided schools for the children and decent conditions for all his workers, and found that it paid. Convinced by his experiments, he devoted himself to securing remedies for the terrible industrial conditions, and we have seen his partial success in the Factory Acts. In 1816 came the first great crisis of unemployment due to over-production, and Owen rapidly became convinced that remedial measures were useless and that the whole competitive system of capitalist industry was wrong. His main theories were : (a) the object of all human exertion is happiness ; (b) man's character is made by his environment ; once convince people of this and they will willingly set about creating environment that shall produce fine character. Since it was obvious that capitalist industry was creating environments bound to deteriorate man rather than elevate him, capitalism must go. The 1816 crisis showed that production had outrun consumption, high profits made by a thrifty class had increased the amount of capital, while low wages had depressed the purchasing power of the working-class ; the problem was to bring consumption to the level of production. Owen arrived at the plan of combining labour and expenditure, i. e. communism. He urged people to form co-operative villages in which labour and consumption should alike be shared, which became known as

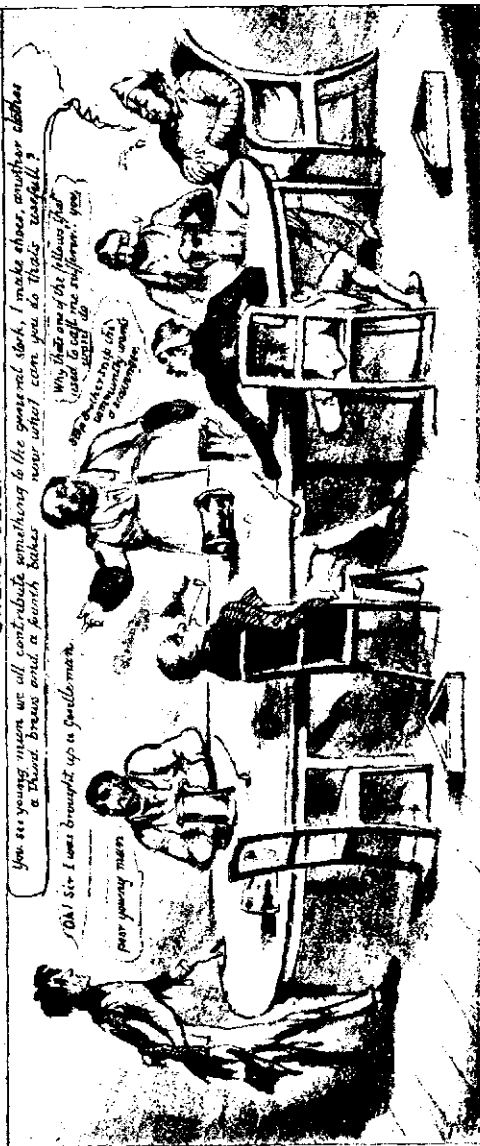
'Owen's Parallelograms' from the orderly lay-out of the streets that he proposed. By 1821 his position was that of pure communism, and he bitterly attacked the current political economy on the ground that it supposed the sole object of society was the accumulation of material wealth, and treated man as an inanimate machine whose capacity for suffering, thinking, and enjoying was of no account.

In 1824 he bought up the Rappist Colony in Indiana and altered it to his own model as New Harmony. The 900 others who joined him proved very unsuitable material for such an experiment, and after three years Owen closed it and returned to England, having lost £30,000. At the same time (1824) the London Co-operative Society was founded, and it was in its magazine, which ran from 1826 to 1830, that the name 'Socialist' was coined. In 1831 Owen started his labour exchanges, where members could buy and sell each other's produce by means of labour-time notes, each thing being valued by the time spent on making it. For four months the plan seemed to be succeeding, but misunderstandings with the owner of the premises, removals, and a bitter press campaign against it caused failure, and in the end the exchanges were closed.

The great outburst of Trade Unionism in 1833-4 was largely due to Owen's inspiration, but his aims were not really those of the Trade Union leaders, for he believed that the solution was by co-operation of capital and labour, while the labour leaders were moving steadily towards the belief that the capitalist and the labourer were fundamentally opposed. His quarrels with these men helped probably to bring about the collapse already described.

**Laissez-Faire and the Minimum Wage.** The effect of the theories of the orthodox political economists is best shown in connexion with the struggle for a legal minimum wage. According to the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, if all restrictions were abolished and capital and labour left free to use unfettered competition, then wages would automatically find their just level and capital its natural reward. If wages in any trade fell too low, then

**OWEN'S PLAN.**



You see young men we all contribute something to the general stock, I make shoes, another clothes a third brass and a fourth bakes

Why that one of the fellows that used to call me swiftover, you suggest do

YDA! Sir I was brought up a gentle man

one who ever his (it) in consequence of a disagreeable

poor young men

**A MUTUAL LABOUR COMMITTEE** sitting for the admission of members.

The poor may do without the rich, combine to supply each other with the necessaries of life. live in perfect equality & have leisure to improve their minds.

From a cartoon by William Heath published in *The Looking Glass*, No. 11, 1831

labourers would transfer their services to some other; if they rose too high, an influx of workers from less-favoured trades would soon bring them down. The great thing was not to interfere. This theory was false, if for no other reason than that it supposed labour to be absolutely fluid, automatically transferring itself immediately to where the pressure was least. Labour never is thus fluid, not even now, one hundred years later; then it was a highly viscous treacle easily crystallizing. Looking back it is easy to see that the one measure which might have stayed the torrent of misery was the fixing by authority of a minimum wage. There were men among the employers who saw this, and the labourers instinctively turned to the law to help them. The law of Elizabeth empowering justices to fix maximum wages, and that of James I to fix lower as well as upper limits, had long been in abeyance, and in 1795 Whitbread introduced a Bill to empower Justices of the Peace to fix wages for agricultural labourers, with penalties for paying less. It was killed by the eloquence of Pitt, who based his opposition on the principles of Adam Smith, and preferred the benevolence of the wealthy to save the labourer from starvation to the interference of Parliament with the operations of supply and demand. In 1800 Whitbread made a second attempt, after Pitt had given up the Poor Law problem in despair, but the opposition was even fiercer, and he failed completely. Pitt talked largely of the importance of labour finding its own level, and a Parliament of landowners eagerly 'disguised under the gold dust of Adam Smith's philosophy'<sup>1</sup> their own rapacity.

From 1805 to 1808 the cotton weavers were agitating for the same thing, and were supported ostensibly by the wealthier masters, but, as we have seen,<sup>2</sup> they failed completely.

That the plan proposed did considerably benefit the workers is shown by the position of the Spitalfields silk-weavers. In 1773 they had secured an Act regulating their wages, and in

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Village Labourer*, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 380.

1792 it was extended to cover workers in silk mixtures, and in 1811 to women workers. The opponents of regulation asserted that trade was thereby driven from London, and this was true to a certain extent, but the contrast between themselves and the sweated workers of Coventry and Macclesfield, the rival unregulated centres, convinced the men that the Act was a benefit to them. The Coventry weavers agitated in vain for the same protection. A limited trade under decent conditions proved preferable to both men and masters. For fifty years the Spitalfields weavers remained an aristocracy among workers, but in 1824 the Act was repealed, and at the same moment the prohibition of foreign silks was changed to a 35 per cent. duty, and the silk-weavers soon dropped to the state of other textile workers. In 1840 they tried to get a trade board to regulate their wages, but *laissez-faire* was still the orthodox creed, and 'labour continued to find its own level of starvation'.<sup>1</sup>

One interference with wages the Government did venture on. In 1831 was passed an Act against TRUCK<sup>2</sup> in the textile, mining, and metallurgical industries. For many years it was largely evaded.

**Taxation.** The story of the taxation of the nation during the period from 1763 to 1834 is significant from two points of view, of great value as warnings for the future. The need for increased revenue raised the whole question of the financial relations of the Colonies to the mother country, and the system of Government borrowings was tried on a portentous scale as a result of the demands of the American and revolutionary wars.

The other point requires more detailed investigation. We have seen that by 1763 it was becoming a difficult matter to find fresh sources of taxation. For a time the sudden expansion in the wealth of the country after 1765 automatically raised the revenue, but the American war cost 97 millions and the revolu-

<sup>1</sup> Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer*, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 129.

tionary wars 831 millions. At three different dates the figures were as follows :

	1775 Millions.	1792 Millions.	1815 Millions.
National Debt . . . . .	126	237½	860
Annual Debt Charge . . . . .	4½	9½	32
Civil Government Cost . . . . .	1½	2	—
Naval and Military . . . . .	3½	6½	—
Revenue . . . . .	10	17½	74½

In 1815 the National Debt reached its highest figure before the Great War ; the population of the British Isles was between 19 and 20 millions, and the debt represented £43 a head. In spite of rising trade and manufactures, high farming and enclosures, to raise nearly 75 millions annually meant taxing almost everything. Pitt indeed had discovered two new sources of revenue ; in 1796 he levied a tax on all legacies of personal property to collaterals, and in 1799 he imposed a general INCOME-TAX of 10 per cent., with certain exemptions. Both of these were to form staple sources of revenue in the nineteenth century and to supersede the hundred and one indirect taxes that strangled men before 1830. A table of the principal taxes in 1815 is below :

#### *Direct Taxes*

	<i>Millions.</i>
1. The Land-tax converted to a perpetual rent-charge and redeemable, produced . . . . .	1½
2. Taxes on establishments (window-tax, house duty, carriages, servants, armorial bearings, &c.), produced . . . . .	6½
3. Income-tax of 10 per cent., produced . . . . .	14½
4. Taxes on insured property (fire and marine), nearly . . . . .	1
5. Legacy duties on personal property . . . . .	1¼
6. On coaches and other means of locomotion, on professions and licences to trade, about . . . . .	½
7. Tonnage on shipping . . . . .	17

#### *Indirect Taxes*

1. Eatables. Salt, sugar, raisins, currants, pepper . . . . .	5
2. Drinks. Beer, wine, spirits, tea, coffee . . . . .	23
3. Tobacco . . . . .	2
4. Other articles of consumption (coal, building . . . . .	



	<i>Millions.</i>
materials, ship-building, raw cotton, silk and hemp, soap, glass, candles, paper, newspapers, advertisements, &c.)	10
5. Stamp duties (extended to 'every species of written or printed document necessary for carrying on the business of mankind'), produced	2½



THE COMET!!!

CARTOON of 1811 in which John Bull endeavours to snuff the flame of Pitt's taxation.

It appears from the above that nearly 63 per cent. of the total taxation was indirect and fell on articles in common use. An estimate in 1833 gives £11 7s. 7d. as the taxes paid by a labourer out of an income of £22 10s. True £4 11s. 3d. of this is for malt, but even deducting this it amounts to nearly one-third of the income. The following extract from an article by Sydney Smith in 1820 expresses with a somewhat grim humour the state of affairs :

'We can inform Brother Jonathan what are the inevitable consequences of being too fond of glory. Taxes upon every

article which enters into the mouth or covers the back or is placed under the foot. Taxes upon everything which it is pleasant to see, hear, feel, smell, or taste. Taxes upon warmth, light, and locomotion. Taxes on everything on earth or under the earth, on everything that comes from abroad or is grown at home. Taxes on the raw material, taxes on every fresh value that is added to it by the industry of man. Taxes on the sauce which pampers man's appetite, and the drug which restores him to health; on the ermine which decorates the judge, and the rope which hangs the criminal; on the poor man's salt and the rich man's spice; on the brass nails of the coffin, and the ribbons of the bride; at bed or board, couchant or levant we must pay. The schoolboy whips his taxed top; the beardless youth manages his taxed horse with a taxed bridle on a taxed road; and the dying Englishman, pouring his medicine which has paid 7 per cent. into a spoon which has paid 15 per cent., flings himself back upon his chintz bed which has paid 22 per cent., and expires in the arms of an apothecary who has paid a licence of £100 for the privilege of putting him to death. His whole property is then immediately taxed from 2 to 10 per cent. . . . His virtues are handed down to posterity on taxed marble, and he will then be gathered to his fathers to be taxed no more.'<sup>1</sup>

The chief cause of this crushing taxation was, of course, war. But besides the millions poured out in trying to rule people who preferred to rule themselves, or in helping reactionary despots stem the current of liberty from France, there was colossal waste. A million and a half went in absolute sinecures, war contractors profited according to their kind and with no check whatever, and above all Pitt adopted a system of paying off debt by borrowing at an even higher rate of interest. That ineptitude alone cost the country 20 millions. So concerned were the more serious economists at the colossal burden of debt that Ricardo, in 1819 and again in 1823, suggested a capital levy to pay it off once and for all.

**Summary.** I. Attempts to pass General Enclosure Acts and

<sup>1</sup> Dowell, *History of Taxation*, ii. 250.



2. The corn policy of the last two centuries was continued up to 1815, and export and import were controlled by a sliding scale which tended to steady prices, and generally succeeded. But in 1815 the first definitely protective corn law was passed, with the object of keeping up the price of corn. The result was a growing agitation against this exploitation of the consumer in the interest of farmer and landlord.

3. The increase in the severity of the Game Laws was a feature of the time, and added to the burden of the half-starved agricultural labourer.

4. The repeal of the Combination Laws in 1824-5, the work of Francis Place, was the first great step of the new proletariat towards freedom. The old laws that put the control of wages in the hands of the magistrates were repealed in 1813-14; after 1824 the workers began to be free to take measures to control them themselves.

5. The Poor Law and Settlement Law were tinkered with, though not fundamentally altered, but the administration of them became hopelessly confused. By a system of using poor relief to supplement wages the countryside was utterly demoralized; large farmers got their labour at the cost of the rates, and many were practically driven to make themselves paupers in order to live. By the end of the period the custom had spread to the towns.

6. The tyranny of the ruling class was shown in its attitude towards all assemblies of poor folk, whether peaceful or riotous. This was partly due to the lack of any organized police force and the consequent use of soldiers on every occasion. Hence arose incidents like Peterloo and the brutal suppression of Luddite and agricultural rioters. The Penal Code, already drastic, was greatly increased in severity at the end of the eighteenth century; even petty theft could be visited with the death penalty. The use of spies by the Government was general, and most of them seem to have been agents provocateurs.

7. The callousness of the ruling class of the time can be accounted for in several ways. The arrogance of unchecked

# JOHN BULL

AND THE

# NEW TAXES.

Here are some lines about the times,  
That cannot fail to please ye.  
And if they don't it can't be helped,  
But I don't wish to tease ye.  
Go where you will, by day or night,  
The town or country through,  
The people cry I wonder what  
They ever mean to do.

### CHORUS.

The oldest person living now,  
Never saw such times before  
When Victoria went to Parliament,  
The deuce a word she said,  
About the state of England,  
The Corn Laws or the Bread.  
They did expect she'd something say,  
Which caused a pretty bother,  
And the speech was full of nonsense,  
From one end to the other  
They are going to raise the mustard,  
They are going to tax the gin,  
They are going to tax the needles,  
And they are going to tax the pins.  
They are going to tax the bonnets,  
They are going to tax the hats,  
And they are going to clap a heavy tax  
On pickled eels and sprats,  
They are going to tax scissors,  
Kettles, tables, spoons and knives,  
They're going to tax all donkey drivers  
And their blooming wives.  
And for to raise some money,  
For the wedding of the Queen,  
They'll tax old maids and bachelors,  
That have turned seventeen.  
They'll tax salt fish and parsnips,  
They will tax all kitchen stuff,  
They will tax the soap and soda,  
The potash and the snuff.  
They will tax the ladies' bustles,  
They will double tax the rum,  
And the day before Good Friday,  
They will tax the hot cross buns

They will tax the hot cross buns,  
The bedsteads and the windows,  
They are going to tax the coals and  
coke.

The chamber pots and cinders.  
And they are going to tax the farmer.  
And they'll treble tax the hay,  
And they are going to make policemen  
Live on thirteen pence a day.

They are going to tax the brewers,  
They are going to tax the baker  
They are going to tax the grocers  
And are going to hang the quakers

They are going to tax all soldiers,  
And are going to drub all sailors  
And are going to play the devil,  
With the cobblers and the tailors.

They will TAX baked potatoes,  
And they are going to tax the swipes  
They will lay a tax on hot peas soup.  
The cowheels and the tripe.

They are going to tax the bacon,  
And they are going to tax cheese,  
And when the sun begins to shine,  
They will tax the bugs and fleas.

They will tax the ground we walk on  
They will tax the bread and meat,  
They are going to tax the blankets  
The bolsters and the sheets.

They will lay a tax on every thing,  
They keep the tax on corn,  
And they will in future tax all children  
A week before they are born.

They are going to tax the butter,  
They are going to tax the eggs,  
And they are going to tax three cock'd  
bats,

And all the wooden legs.  
To tax and starve the nation,  
They do cobble up some laws,  
And the devil swears he'll tax them all  
When they get into his claws.

Sold Wholesale by B. Walker, 96, Westgate, Bradford.

BROADSIDE OF THE TIME

power, since the Revolution had thrown all control, central and local, into the hands of the great territorial magnates, found an excuse, though hardly a justification, in the terror produced by the excesses of the French Revolution. Then the greatness of the new wealth dazzled the eyes of its owners to the misery on which it was built. It was such a very good thing that one must expect to pay some price for it. Lastly, those who had consciences satisfied them with charity. The low state of the religious life of the country contributed its share to the general indifference, and neither of the religious revivals of the time was on lines likely to rouse its followers to the primal duty of loving their neighbours.

8. The political economy of the time was such as to paralyse all effort to ameliorate the condition of the wage-earner. *Laissez-faire*, the iron law of wages, and Malthusianism, all cried together to let things alone or you would make them worse. The 'dismal science' decreed that things like this were inevitable. The early school of Socialists, with Owen as chief dreamer, denied furiously the assumptions of the orthodox school; their cry of brotherhood was lost in the whirring of the wheels and the clamour of the mart.

9. Taxation. The whole period under review was a period of war finance. The National Debt was multiplied by 7 in 40 years. Pitt introduced two direct taxes, a legacy duty and an income-tax; but 63 per cent. of the taxation was indirect, and it fell most heavily on the poorest. Everything in constant use was taxed, and even a labourer earning 10s. a week paid away a third of it in taxes.

## PART VII

### LAISSER-FAIRE TRIUMPHANT

#### I. High Farming and Free Trade. 1834-74

**Progress of Farming.** The period before us can be roughly subdivided into three: from 1834 to 1846, when the Corn Laws were abolished; from 1846 to 1853, a time of transition and stress; and from 1853 to 1870, the 'Golden Age' of English farming. The last four years cover a time of crisis and the entrance on modern times.

The condition of the agricultural industry in 1834 was bad; it had not recovered from the disastrous fall in prices after the close of the Napoleonic wars; the impetus given by those wars had been reversed by the times of peace, and the pendulum had started on its customary swing backwards. It was not that good farming was unknown, but that even twenty years of high prices and prosperity had not been long enough to move the majority of farmers to make the most of the opportunity by introducing fresh methods. A large part of the practice of modern farming was known in 1834 and used by the more enlightened tenants and landlords, but the old ways still did for the majority. This was particularly the case on clay lands and in those large areas of inferior land that war-prices had induced farmers to plough up, and which, with corn below 50s. a quarter and their first fertility exhausted, could no longer be made to pay without large expenditure of capital. There were still many open fields, beasts were badly housed and existed in winter on starvation rations, fat cattle tramped long ways to market and arrived thin; long-legged sheep were still desir-

able in a country of tracks rather than roads ; little land had as yet been drained, ploughs were still clumsy wooden affairs drawn by five horses or six oxen, harrows and rollers still most primitive, the latter often a mere weighted log ; corn and roots were sown broadcast, hoeing was almost entirely neglected, corn threshed, winnowed, and screened by hand. The problem was how to diffuse knowledge of better and more economical methods. From this standpoint the drop in prices was an advantage ; sluggards, who, with wheat over 100s. a quarter, could make money with little work, were weeded out, and the period 1837-46 saw the disappearance of these. With them, too, went the small men with insufficient capital to meet the new needs ; inevitable perhaps, but not an unmixed gain.

Let us look at the improvements made between the beginning and end of our period, for in 1837 the ' age of farming by extension of area had ended, that of farming by intension of capital had begun '.<sup>1</sup> The crying need was for DRAINAGE. The general practice was a system of high ridging by which the rain flowed off the surface into hollows between, and took with it all the richest surface soil. The ridged ground also lost all the values left by the rain in slow percolation through the soil. In 1823 James Smith had drained a small farm in Perthshire by trenches filled with stones and covered over, and in 1831 he published an account of it ; in 1843 Josiah Parkes developed the method and laid down general principles. At the same time John Reade, a gardener, produced a cylindrical clay pipe, and in 1845 Thomas Scragg invented a pipe-making machine. Immediately draining operations spread through the country, and farmers on clay land added many working days to both ends of their season.

IMPLEMENTS naturally underwent some improvement in an age of rapid mechanical change. Varieties of ploughs, light and heavy, and suited to different soils, became common, and iron harrows—scarifiers, grubbers, cultivators, and clod-crushers—came into general use ; corn- and seed-drills that sowed in

<sup>1</sup> Prothero, *English Farming*, p. 361.



# INSTRUMENTS OF HUSBANDRY,

&c. &c.

MADE AND SOLD BY

## A. STEVENSON,

No. 74,

MARGARET-STREET, CAVENDISH-SQUARE,  
L O N D O N;

*(From the late Mr. WINLAW; Maker of all his  
Thrashing Machines and Ploughs, for Ten Years past).*

**A** Thrashing Machine worked by Horses or Water, which will thrash Thirty Quarters of Wheat in One Day, and other Grain in Proportion, without any previous Preparation of the Straw.

A Hand ditto, worked by Two Men, which will thrash Thirty Bushels per Day.

A Winnowing Machine for cleaning Corn, Rice, Grass, Seeds, &c.

An Engine for cutting Straw, so contrived as to bring the Straw regularly forward, without stopping the Machine; and will with ease, by One Man, cut Thirty Bushels of Chaff in an Hour.

A Machine for Bruising Beans or Oats for Horses, Malt, &c.

A Machine for Weighing live Cattle, Sheep, Bale Goods, &c.

A Mill for Grinding Wheat, &c. for Private Families.

Engines for Watering Gardens, and Extinguishing Fire.

Syringes for Watering Green-house Plants.

Tilting Barrows, with Two Wheels, so constructed as not to injure the Garden Walks.

Ditto, with a Roller in the place of Wheels.

Field and Garden Rollers, of any Size.

Machines for Slicing Turnips, Carrots, Potatoes, or Cabbages, for Cattle

All Sorts of Ploughs and Harrows.

Cotton Gins, for eradicating the Seeds from Cotton, and other Implements used in the Plantations.

Ventilators for drawing Foul Air out from Mines, Prisons, Ships' Holds, &c. &c.—with all Kinds of Models for Husbandry or Mechanics, cheaper than any where else in London.

Printed at CRAFT'S Office, Wells-Street, Oxford-Street.

straight lines and at an even depth, horse-hoes, haymakers, and horse-rakes appeared. A reaper had been invented in 1826, but hardly came into general use till after 1853, and the same was true of threshing and winnowing machines already invented in the eighteenth century. After 1850 came steam-driven barn machinery which threshed the corn, raised the straw to the loft, winnowed and dressed the grain, divided it according to quality, and delivered it into sacks. Turnip- and chaff-cutters were already known in 1837, and later came machines for pumping, grinding, cake-crushing, bean-splitting, and pulping turnips.

**STOCK-BREEDING.** The work of the eighteenth-century pioneers was taken up and improved, and the formation of pedigree herds of cattle and sheep became general. Shorthorns, Herefords, and Devons were improved, and new breeds such as Sussex, Ayrshire, and Channel Island were introduced and perfected. In sheep the progress was even more marked, and Lincolns, Oxford Downs, and Shropshires rivalled the Leicesters, Cotswolds, and South Downs of the preceding period.

**AGRICULTURAL CHEMISTRY.** The pride of the new movement was the application of science to agriculture. The problem raised and very largely solved was how to put back most quickly into the soil the fertilizing properties used up by each crop. The pioneer worker was Liebig in Germany, who in 1840 published his *Chemistry in its Applications to Agriculture and Physiology*. Then came the experimental station at Rothamsted, where the varying effects of manures were studied as well as the results on animals of different feeding. Up to 1837 the manures that a farmer could buy, as distinct from what his farmyard produced, were soot, bones, salt, saltpetre, horns and hoofs, shoddy, marl, lime, clay, and chalk. Before 1850 chemistry had added nitrate of soda, superphosphates, muriate of potash, rape-dust, and sulphate of ammonia, while it had found a use for the refuse of London's slaughter-houses by treatment with sulphuric acid. The geologists, too, had introduced the farmer to many mineral phosphates, and an increasing shipping trade brought him quantities of Peruvian guano from across the ocean. The

increased use of manures had also an indirect effect ; they conduced to clean farming, since they were too costly to be allowed to encourage weeds or to be washed away on ill-drained ground.

A sign of the move forward was the foundation in 1838 of the ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY, which brought together the man of science and the practical farmer. ' For more than 70 years it has been the heart and brain of agriculture.'<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, the coming of the RAILWAYS made transport easier, brought the new inventions quickly to the fields, and carried off to distant markets the produce unspoilt and undeteriorated.

But the progress was not to lack set-backs. From 1846 to 1853 times were bad ; landlords and farmers were persuaded that the abolition of the Corn Laws heralded their coming ruin ; there was a series of bad seasons in 1848, 1850, 1852, and 1853 ; there was a big financial crisis due to over-speculation in railways and a series of potato famines. Landlords, convinced that with the Corn Laws must go the high rents of the past, pressed on their tenants every form of improved farming, so that the rents need not drop too much. This, of course, had one good result in that production was largely increased, but where landlords had no spare capital or where estates were encumbered, the burden fell on the farmer, and he had a bad time. The West and Midlands suffered least, the corn areas of the South and East most. Rents were, in fact, kept much too high ; they were calculated to be double those of 1770, and though enhanced prices for stock and butter and wool might meet them, corn could not. Consequently much land fell back on the landlords' hands, and the situation had to be faced that only by high farming with large capital could land be made to pay.

By 1853 matters were adjusting themselves, and the next ten years showed unprecedented prosperity. Several causes combined to produce this :

(a) The discovery of the goldfields of California increased the world's supply of gold and sent prices up (see p. 183).

<sup>1</sup> Prothero, *English Farming*, p. 359.

(b) It was a period of great trade expansion, and consequently of large home markets for agricultural produce.

(c) In 1854 war closed down the Russian export of corn.

(d) There was a series of good seasons.

The result was that prices remained steadily high up to 1870, particularly for wool, the price of which doubled between 1851 and 1864. Production reached its highest level up to modern times.

The one weak place in the farming of the 'golden age' was dairying. Comparatively little attention was paid to it till after 1874, in spite of the great development of cattle already noticed. This development had been achieved in face of some serious epidemics. Foot-and-mouth disease became common after 1839 and pleuropneumonia after 1840. But in 1865 rinderpest (cattle-plague) wrought such havoc that in the strenuous steps taken to stamp it out<sup>1</sup> the other two diseases were nearly ended as well.

We may note here that high farming brought with it its own problems of tenure and of relations between tenant and landlord. The law assumed that the land and all that was in it belonged to the landlord, and some method had to be found to induce farmers to expend large sums enriching land, when the increased value might have to be left at the end of the lease for the landlord to exploit at will. The question of tenants' improvements became increasingly urgent throughout the period, and was not solved till after 1875.

**Completion of Enclosures.** We have said that in 1834 there were still many open fields, and we shall find that enclosures continue right up to 1874. In 1836 came the SECOND GENERAL ENCLOSURE ACT, of which the chief provisions were:

(a) Two-thirds in number and value of the proprietors of common-fields could appoint commissioners to enclose without a special Act of Parliament.

<sup>1</sup> Over 10,000 cattle were destroyed by Government order in one week in March 1866, in an April week only 4,000, and by the end of June only 338; by December only 8.

(b) If seven-eighths of them could agree among themselves they need not even appoint a commission.

(c) By agreement among the holders their lots could be consolidated without fencing, thus saving expense and securing some of the advantages of enclosure.

(d) In the case of very small proprietors the commissioners were given power to help with the cost of fencing.

In 1844 a COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY on enclosures was held, which reported that there were still two million acres of open fields and eight million of commons and waste. They urged a continuance of the process of enclosure. Next year, 1845, came the THIRD GENERAL ENCLOSURE ACT, which tried to undo, too late, some of the evils of the past scramble.

(a) Permanent Commissioners were appointed to take the place of the Parliamentary Committee.

(b) Land was to be reserved for recreation in quantities to correspond with the population of the parish.

(c) There were to be allotments for the poor.

(d) Expenses of enclosing were reduced to one-tenth of what they had been.

The second and third clauses were largely ignored by the Commissioners, and in 1869 a return made to the House of Commons showed that out of 614,804 acres enclosed only 1,742 acres were reserved for recreation and 2,223 for the labouring poor. Even if some three-fifths of the total acreage were waste or unstinted common, the amount was not generous; in 1876 the LAST GENERAL ENCLOSURE ACT ordered more consideration to be shown to the poor, and with that enclosures practically ceased.

We may perhaps look ahead a little and note what enclosures had done to the tenure of the soil of England. In 1887, in a population of some 27,000,000, out of 481,828 occupiers of land only 64,588 persons owned all the land they occupied and 18,991 owned part. The rest were tenants on lease or at will. Look back to Gregory King's 160,000 freeholders among a popula-

tion of 5½ millions, and the revolution wrought is seen to be complete.

**Condition of the Agricultural Labourer.** It is time to turn to the manual worker and to see how these changes affected his lot and whether he shared in the general prosperity. In the years that followed 1834 the condition of the agricultural labourer was almost as bad as possible, so bad indeed that, but for the opportunities to leave the occupation afforded by the industrial expansion and the work on the railways, it is doubtful whether the new Poor Law could have been administered at all. The result of the Speenhamland system had been to leave a greatly over-populated countryside, most of the inhabitants drawing poor relief in one form or another. Now the fundamental changes introduced by the Poor Law of 1834 (see p. 580) were that no relief should be given to able-bodied men outside the workhouse, and that the parish was no longer under an obligation to find work for the unemployed. What happened? Did the labourers starve or did the farmers raise the wages now the rates were less? Wages did not rise, except in the North and Midlands, where the competition of the industrial towns produced relative scarcity of labour. Hasbach is of opinion that the farmers could not pay a living wage, because either they paid rent on leases based on an expectation of a price of 64s. for wheat, whereas it was below 50s., or else, when leases fell in, the landlords, instead of lowering rents, tried to raise them on the ground of lessened rates. On the other hand, there is evidence of somewhat more considerate treatment of men by their employers, who could no longer get 'roundsmen' (see p. 328), and who noted that, while their best workers tended to emigrate, paupers in workhouses cost more to keep than workers outside. But the old and sick were forced into the house, and the exploitation of women and children grew till it became a scandal. For wages, even if they rose a little with rising prices, never reached a level above the fodder basis; they might support the man and a babe or two, the rest of the family must earn their keep. A married man with four children over ten years old was estimated to

double his income by their work. If he earned about £25 per annum, the four children would earn as much. Women's wages were round about 9d. a day, and girls' varied from 4d. to 6d.; boys, who went to work earlier than girls, earned from 2d. to 8d. a day. There is no doubt that not only did the work of women and children tend to keep a man's wages at the minimum necessary for an unmarried man to live, but it also tended to depress that small sum by its competition. Worst of all, 'a premium was again put upon the labourer's marriage, though his true prospects were a decade or so of hard work and privation, then a possible sufficiency for himself, his wife, and six or eight children for some fifteen or twenty years more; after that at about fifty-five years old with powers beginning to fail, renewed privations; and finally, when he should no longer be able to work, "the house" for himself and his wife, or himself alone as a widower'.<sup>1</sup>

But bad as this exploitation of women and children was, its evils were increased by the particular form it took in the eastern counties. This was known as the GANG SYSTEM. It appears as early as 1826, and seems to have originated in connexion with farms isolated on newly approved waste and drained fens. Not wishing to build cottages and attract labourers to come and acquire a settlement, the farmer fell back on casual labour from a distance. The remaining open villages were full of labourers glad to go anywhere to work, and the custom arose of one man contracting with the farmer to supply a gang of so many workers for so long. The gangs were largely composed of women and children, and they went sometimes daily, often for weeks at a time. In the latter case they slept in barns and outhouses and fed as they could. The system was very profitable to the farmer and landlord, very demoralizing to the workers. The gang-masters were accused of sweating and extortion, but it is possible they made little more out of it than the workers. Later, farmers took to organizing gangs under their own overseers, and here there is plenty of evidence of the worst of those

<sup>1</sup> Hasbach, *History of the Agricultural Labourer*, pp. 229-30.

evils. The system grew till 1867, when it reached the dimensions of a public scandal; an inquiry was made and an Act passed regulating it, known as THE GANGS ACT, 1868. By this (a) no child under eight was to be employed at all; (b) no women or girls were to work in a gang with men; (c) gang-masters were to be licensed, and if they employed women there must also be a licensed gang-mistress; (d) no innkeeper was to have a licence.

A comparison of dates shows that the heyday of production was the time of greatest exploitation, and that very neatness and cleanliness which mark out our English farming from all other were the result of the cheap labour of children and women. As far as the woman was concerned the evil was in the low wages, not in the work itself; except where it took her away from the care of her home, she was probably better off at heavy outdoor labour than working fourteen hours a day at a sweated domestic industry. But for the children it was entire loss. It is doubtful if those under ten years of age earned a sum that covered the wear and tear of boots and clothes, it is certain that it took from them even the meagre opportunities of education then offered.

The effective remedy for the exploitation of children came in 1876 with the triumph of the education movement. In 1870 the first Education Act was passed; it provided an authority and ordered it to establish sufficient schools for boys and girls; in 1873 an Act forbade any child to be employed on the land (except by his own father on his own land) under the age of eight, and not until he had passed the fourth standard, but the minimum number of school attendances required was not great and, provided these were made, a child over eight could still be employed, and all children at harvest time. But in 1876 came the real beginning of the children's emancipation. Elementary instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic was made compulsory for every child, and none under ten were to be employed, except by special permission of the local authority for six weeks in the year. Children over ten could be employed if they had



reached a certain standard or made a minimum number of attendances. It was a curious scheme that cut short the education of clever children at eleven or twelve and kept the dullards at it till fourteen, but the basic idea was a minimum of instruction for all, not the education of each according to his ability. The Act was very imperfect, but it was the first step.



#### THE PIG AND THE PEASANT<sup>1</sup>

Peasant : ' Ah ! I'd like to be cared vor half as well as thee be.'

Such was the condition of the agricultural labourer during the forty years of our period, but we must give special consideration to the terrible condition of the manual worker, both in town and country, during the ' hungry forties ', because it forced forward the new policy of Free Trade. The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 did little for the rural labourer, for, so far as prices

<sup>1</sup> Punch Cartoon of September 1863, reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of *Punch*.

fell, his wages fell to match, and when prices rose after 1850 and landlords raised rents accordingly, the farmers, to meet the claims made upon them, took to machinery and to an extension of the labour of women and children. Consequently, in spite of emigration, the supply of adult male labour remained in excess of the demand. Under such conditions in a competitive system, none of the increased profits could reach the wage-earner, though always the North and Midlands fared better than the South and East, even as to-day agricultural wages in industrial areas soar far above the pittance of Dorset and Hampshire.

**Attempts to better the Labourer's Lot.** In 1851 Charles Kingsley flung out to the philanthropists of England the defiance :

You may tire of the gaol and the workhouse,  
 And take to allotments and schools,  
 But you've run up a debt that will never  
 Be repaid us by penny-club rules ;

Let us see how, at any rate, they tried. First of all they took to ALLOTMENTS. There had been several attempts before 1834 to mitigate the harshness of the new system to the deserving poor. As early as 1782 an Act allowed the guardians of the poor to enclose up to ten acres for the benefit of the poor, provided they could get the permission of the lord of the manor and the majority of those holding common rights, and in 1819 permission was given to run parish farms for the able-bodied paupers or to let part of the land to poor men. The 1801 Enclosure Act had tried to do something on the same lines. Several great landowners reserved small pieces of land for their labourers, as Cobbett noted with approval in 1821. The Poor Law Inquiry of 1832-4 found that while parish farms were not a success, allotments were. But their extent depended on the goodwill and philanthropy of the landlords, and this dependence is seen in the conditions attached to the holdings, which were often conventional and moral, rather than economic. No work was allowed on Sunday, and absence from church might disqualify the holder ; drunkenness, gambling, and swearing might lead to expulsion.

In 1842 there was a bad industrial crisis; this reacted on prices of food, which fell and agricultural wages followed, to as low in some places as 5s. a week. There was unemployment and spasmodic rick-burning. In consequence there were two inquiries held. Their reports, the *Report of the Poor Law Commission on the employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* and the *Report from the Select Committee on the Labouring Poor (Allotments of Land)*, showed that while allotments existed in every county, they were not universal in a single one; their increase was strongly urged. It was estimated that a quarter of an acre could keep a large family for thirteen weeks and was equal to 2s. a week extra wage. The committee thought that the best results were obtained from small pieces of land worked by spade labour in the workmen's spare time, and consequently that allotments should not be too big, should be as near the dwelling-houses as possible, and that the landlord should pay the rates, so that the small man should not have to find the money at inconvenient times. Opposition came chiefly from the farmers, who objected (a) that having such a resource to fall back upon the labourer became too independent; (b) that he reserved his best efforts for his own land; (c) that he would steal the farmer's corn, &c., to feed his own animals; and (d) that there wasn't any land to spare, as they, the farmers, needed it all themselves. The village shopkeepers also had their vested interests, for the labourer who could supply himself with a quarter of his food would buy less from them, and innkeepers disliked labourers spending time digging which might be better occupied drinking to their profit. Three attempts to carry out the recommendations of the report by legislation in 1843, 1844, and 1845 failed, though something was secured, as we have seen, in the Enclosure Act of 1845, only to be frustrated by the administration. So the movement was left to the generosity of private men, and up to 1868 considerable progress on these lines was made by great landowners like Lord Shaftesbury, who provided 396 allotments in Dorset, and the Duke of Marlborough, who gave 914 in Oxfordshire. After 1868 there was a falling off, either from lack of

interest on the part of the landlords or possibly because the high rents asked made the holdings of less value. Sometimes as much as five times the sum paid per acre by the farmer was demanded for the small holding. In 1870 there was still much room for development on these lines.

**EDUCATION.** Until the employment of children was forbidden and attendance at school made compulsory, there was no chance of any improvement. 'High farming' did not need an educated working class; like the factory it asked 'hands', skilled indeed for their special job, but beyond that the less developed the better. We have seen (p. 476) that the experiment of educating the labourer was begun in 1870 in a small way; such results as there were appear in the next generation.

**Trade Unions.** Since the time of the Dorchester labourers, all hope of bettering their position had died among the rural workers. But in the late sixties things began to stir, public opinion was rousing itself, official reports proclaimed the miserable wages and housing conditions of the rural worker; the Royal Commission of 1867 had closely investigated the conditions of his life, and bit by bit facts crept into the papers that roused sympathy among the middle classes and diffused knowledge among the men themselves. Into the wave of Trade Unionism that came in 1871 in all trades and all parts, the agricultural labourers were swept. In 1872 a few labourers in a village near Leamington wrote an account of their wretched condition to a local newspaper; others met at Wellesbourne, read this letter, and decided to invite the help of Joseph Arch, a labourer who owned a freehold cottage, and who was known in the district as a Primitive Methodist preacher. On February 13, 1872, Arch addressed some 1,000 labourers under a chestnut tree and roused them to form a Union. The next month 200 men struck for a wage of 16s. and an eleven-hour working day. The movement spread rapidly through the central and eastern counties; public sympathy was aroused and a Union with 64 branches and 5,000 members was formed. Archibald Forbes, the war correspondent, wrote up the labourers' cause in the *Daily News*, and the NATIONAL

AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS' UNION was formed, with Joseph Arch as president. There followed an increase of wages of from 1s. 6d. to 4s. a week. The Union set out to win a great number of objects ; it formed sick benefit clubs and assisted emigration. In one year it spent over £3,000 for this purpose and £2,600 on migrating labourers to the north. The Union leaders had plans, too, for creating peasant proprietors, and hence for agitation against existing land laws, also for the disestablishment of the Church. The latter objects were, no doubt, partly inspired by the bitter hostility that the Unions aroused among landlords, farmers, and clergy. These three classes were still in the state of mind of the manufacturers of forty years before : to form Unions was not merely wanton foolishness, it was a repudiation of that natural and proper subservience due to the masters, whom Providence had placed in control. The rural magistrates stretched the law to its utmost against the labourers, and two clergyman justices sent sixteen labourers' wives to prison with hard labour for 'intimidating' non-Union men. Landlords like the Dukes of Rutland and Marlborough denounced the leaders as disturbers of 'the friendly feeling which used to unite the labourer and his employers', while Dr. Ellicott, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, suggested the horse-pond as a fit place for Union delegates. Army officers, too, intervened and supplied soldiers to reap the farmers' harvests during a strike. After their first defeat, due to the suddenness of the attack, the farmers rallied and opposed to the Unions the full weight of their time-honoured inertia. In 1874 those in Suffolk met a demand for a rise from 13s. to 14s. a week by a lock-out of Union men, and this was taken up by others till 10,000 men were out of work. The National Union, after distributing £21,000 in strike pay, was defeated, and from this time it rapidly declined. Every winter farmers used the lock-out to break individual branches, and in a few years Arch's great Union had sunk to little more than a number of village sick and burial clubs. The discord between rival Unions had been a factor in the decline. The upheaval had not left the countryside unaltered ; thousands had left it

for good, and wages as a whole had risen somewhat. Besides this, farmers had been forced to consider their ways; some had turned to machinery to solve the labour problem; all were looking round for means to better the position for themselves and the question of tenant-rights began to be considered in earnest.

**Tithes.** There was one factor in rural life that the agricultural revolution brought to the fore as increasingly unsuited to the new conditions. We have spoken of tithes<sup>1</sup> in our account of the mediaeval Church, and we have seen that though the Reformation deprived the Church of a large part of them, they by no means ceased to exist.<sup>2</sup> They had largely passed, along with

The great cause has lately been determined that peas and beans gathered green, and carried to Market, are a rectorial or great tythe, and not a vicarial or small one. This is of great consequence to the landed estates about London, where such vast quantities are gathered green for the London markets: They are always looked upon as great Tythes in the parishes of Fulham, Chiswick, Ealing, Isleworth, Twickenham, Kingston, &c. &c. &c.

THE TITHE IN KIND. Newspaper cutting of the nineties.

the monastic lands, to lay impropiators. It was still possible to exact tithe in kind, though by the end of the eighteenth century it was not common. Its inconveniences were obvious, and the farmer put every obstacle in the way of collection. A Hampshire farmer, having notified the tithe-owner that he was about to draw a field of turnips, and wagons and men having duly arrived to carry the tenth part, he proceeded to pull ten turnips and gave one to the tithing-man, with the remark that he would let his master know when he was drawing again. Besides the obvious inconveniences, such as having to wait till the tithe-owner appeared before beginning to harvest, payment in kind produced constant altercations and litigation; the cost, too, of storage was great, and that of marketing had to be

<sup>1</sup> See p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 444.

*Clerical Anticipation*



THE PARSON AND HIS TITHE-PIG.  
Cartoon by Robert Cruikshank

added. Various plans were adopted up to 1836 to avoid the difficulties. In some enclosures land was allotted in place of tithe ; sometimes a fixed corn-rent was substituted. The farmer might buy off the tithe each year at a surveyor's valuation or pay so much in the pound over a period of years. In some parishes the value of the tithe had been fixed for ever a long time before in money value of the time of fixing. Such a plan was unfair to the tithe-owner ; a penny, for example, having long ceased to represent the tenth part of a fleece.

Besides this, the mere existence of the tithe was a drag on agriculture, for while the farmer supplied all the capital sunk in the farm, a tenth of the increased produce had to be paid away. The time was fully ripe for a regulation of the ancient due. In 1836 an ACT FOR THE COMMUTATION OF TITHES was passed. Its object was to arrange for a charge on all land that should vary from time to time in such a way that according to the cost of living it should have the same actual value as at that date. To fix the sum for ever would leave the tithe-owner at the mercy of decreasing or increasing value of money, so it was determined to make it a corn-rent. The main clauses of the Act were :

(a) Within a certain time tithe-owners and tithe-payers of a parish could agree on a total sum to be the present value of the tithe.

(b) If they could not agree in the time a local inquiry would be held by the Commissioners and the tithe valued on a basis of seven years' payments.

(c) The total net sum so decided was divided into three parts and expressed in terms of the number of bushels of wheat, barley, and oats purchasable for that sum, and henceforth the current value of that number of bushels was the value of the tithe in any year. For every £100 of tithe as valued in 1836 the owner was henceforth to receive each year 94·96 times the average price for the preceding seven years of a bushel of wheat, 168·42 times that of a bushel of barley, and 242·42 times in the case of oats.



(d) Payment was transferred from the occupiers to the owners of land. Tithes have thus become a regular known charge on any land, and are duly allowed for in the price of land when it changes hands.

**Summary.** 1. The period saw the culminating point of agriculture in England. By 1853 the change from open field farming was practically complete, most modern methods were known, and chemistry and engineering rapidly supplied deficiencies. High farming became general, both landlords and farmers prospered, and production, except in dairying, reached its maximum.

2. General Enclosure Acts completed a process that dated from the fifteenth century and reached its climax during the Napoleonic wars. Belated attempts to re-attach the poor to the land failed, owing to lack of public opinion to enforce the law.

3. The condition of the agricultural labourer throughout the period was bad; it was at its worst in the 'hungry forties', and improved but slightly during the farmer's seventeen years of prosperity. In spite of the depopulation of the countryside, the supply of labour continued to exceed the demand, and competition was increased by the exploitation of women and children; the exploitation of the latter was limited towards the end of the period by the Education Acts.

4. The main specific for improving the lot of the agricultural labourer was allotments, but in spite of strong representations in their favour, Parliament steadily refused to give them encouragement, and except for the enlightened efforts of several large landowners, nothing was done.

After 1870 there was a burst of Trade Unionism, which was successful for a short time and then died down. It had, however, effected something, and did not become entirely extinct.

5. In the first years of the period the confusion into which the payment of tithes had sunk was cleared up, and the Commutation of Tithes enforced by Act of Parliament in 1836.

## 2. Industrial England from the Reform Bill to the Education Acts

WE have summed up the period from 1834 to 1875 as '*Laissez-faire* Triumphant', and indeed its main interest lies in its practical exposition of how the doctrine of 'each man for himself and the Devil take the hindmost' works out in the happiness and misery of human beings. By 1841 the first upheaval of mechanical inventions was subsiding, equilibrium between the demands of allied processes had more or less been reached; spinner and weaver and finisher, each had his machinery adequate for the supply of raw material to his fellow; the iron industry was sufficiently advanced to supply the necessary machines, and out of the initial scramble each industry was settling down to the organization and size of business that best suited it. The only battle left was that necessary to remove the last bonds of the old regulation; 'the greatest good to the greatest number' was surely coming, now that 'enlightened self-interest' was getting a real chance to show what it could do.

None the less the story we shall have to tell will read almost exactly the opposite way. For the *laissez-faire* school, though triumphant in the main, and successful in clearing the ground of all the old lumber of a dead age, was not allowed to march on without challenge. This challenge came from two quarters, from the Benthamites and from the humanitarians. That the followers of Jeremy Bentham should be among the reformers seems at first a paradox, but for them the doctrine of *laissez-faire* implied also a doctrine of absolute individual liberty. Consequently, while they objected to all governmental interference with trade and industry, they were also for removing every abuse based on privilege, and reforms such as the Municipalities Act, the abolition of the last traces of monopoly, the repeal of much of the Law of Settlement, and finally the establishment of Free Trade, helped to tip the balance in favour of the unprivileged classes. The Benthamite doctrine that 'every man

is to count for one, and no man for more than one', was a weapon of great power in the war against privilege. 'To the disciples of Bentham *laissez-faire* did not mean, as it did to titled loungers like Lord Melbourne, "let things be, don't worry." It was a war-cry, sounding the attack on every law or social convention which hindered freedom of development. It was a campaign for the overthrow of long-established abuses.'<sup>1</sup>

The other group of reformers was of a very different school. To these men, mostly Tories, whose leader was Lord Shaftesbury, the supreme need seemed to be to stop some of the very obvious evils of the new era. To them the plea that these were incidental and necessary evils essential to the establishment of England's commercial supremacy had no value. Shaftesbury himself carried weight where Owen, whose religious views were most 'unsound', and Oastler, who had been imprisoned for debt, seemed doubtful leaders. A deeply religious man, a pillar of the Evangelical party, a peer of the realm, he might be trusted not to draw the nation into any Jacobin morass, nor to be blinded by dreams of an impossible and most undesirable communism. It was to Shaftesbury we owe the long series of Factory Acts, by which the humaner elements of the nation mitigated the lot of the worker under the régime of capitalist individualism. No doubt the political economists were right and the utilitarians preached the real philosophy, but after all there were exceptions, and Englishmen could be trusted to throw logic to the winds, if their feelings were roused, especially by an earl of unblemished religious and moral fame. There were others, men of the pen, not without influence: Carlyle thundering against a 'gospel of mammonism' and the 'liberty to die by starvation', Elizabeth Barrett voicing the children's cry, and Ruskin reminding a hostile public that 'man does not live by bread alone', and that 'there is no wealth but life'.

Regarding the period as a whole we may describe it as the age of iron, when iron became the chief element in construction and the basis of civilized life. Machinery invaded every depart-

<sup>1</sup> C. R. Fay, *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 44.

ment, and iron, with its partner coal, became our first consideration. It was this dependence of the new age on iron and coal and the fact that these islands are rich in both, that tempted us to advance beyond a national economy and make a bid for the markets of the world. Railways and steamships made a new world-economy possible, and England was first in the field. The establishment of Free Trade was the definite break with the past; forty years of peace at home, broken only by the far-distant Crimean War, while Germany, France, and Italy were in constant turmoil, gave England not only a start but a practical monopoly throughout the period. Up to 1875 she was the workshop and the mart of the world.

There are, however, two periods of widely different character. The legend of 'the hungry forties' still is told by old men, the last dip of the depression due to the earlier changes. Few eras have been worse than that which ushered in the Victorian Age. The conditions of the time may be judged from the report of an eyewitness in 1842. Of Colne in Lancashire he says: 'I visited 88 dwellings selected at hazard. They were destitute of furniture save old boxes for tables or stools, or even large stones for chairs; the beds were composed of straw and shavings. The food was oatmeal and water for breakfast, flour and water with a little skimmed milk for dinner, oatmeal and water again for a second supply.' He saw children in the market grubbing for the rubbish of roots. Yet 'all the places and persons I visited were scrupulously clean. The children were in rags but not in filth. In no single instance was I asked for relief.' At Burnley he saw the weavers 'haggard with famine, their eyes rolling with that fierce and uneasy expression common to maniacs. "We do not want charity," they said, "but employment." I found them all Chartists.' Of the 9,000 inhabitants of Accrington only 100 were fully employed. Many lived on nettles, some had food only on alternate days, many only one meal a day.'<sup>1</sup>

By 1850 the tide had turned, and the next twenty-five years

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century*, C. R. Fay, p. 178.

were years of progress and prosperity. Those who heralded the Golden Age at the Great Exhibition of 1851 were not without their seeming justification. Prices rose, but wages rose too; Free Trade did not even ruin the farmers, England dominated the markets of the world and held its carrying trade. Wars or internal unrest occupied all her rivals.

**Special Industries.** COTTON AND WOOL. Between 1834 and 1874 the development in these industries presents nothing striking. The bulk of the machinery had already been invented, and though it was being constantly improved, it did not alter greatly. In the woollen industry hand-work still persisted, hand-combing till after 1840, hand-weaving throughout the period, though the power-loom was general by 1850. In 1838 there were 14,000 hand-loom weavers in Bradford, existing on wages of 6s. and 7s. a week. It was these poor wages that postponed the introduction of machinery. For spinning an economical self-acting mule had been invented by 1830. It became general for the coarser cotton-yarns between 1850 and 1860; for the finer yarns it was not in use till after the cotton famine of 1862-5. By 1882 hand-mules had nearly disappeared. During this period throstle-spinning decayed, but a variant of the method known as ring-spinning, invented in America, took its place.

There was a big advance in dyeing towards the end of this period, heralding a much greater advance in the next thirty years. In 1858 Perkin made the first synthetic<sup>1</sup> dye; mauve and such dyes, derived chiefly from coal-tar, were rapidly made. This work was especially taken up in Germany, where it was eventually developed with great skill and scientific accuracy.

COAL. The increased use of machinery, the construction of railways and later of steamships, increased the demand for coal at an enormous rate after 1836. Many new pits were opened and fresh districts explored. The South Durham coal-field, so far hardly touched, developed rapidly, and by 1838 it was recognized that the best steam-coal was to be found in South

<sup>1</sup> A dye made by combining chemical substances, not derived from vegetable products as the old dyes were.

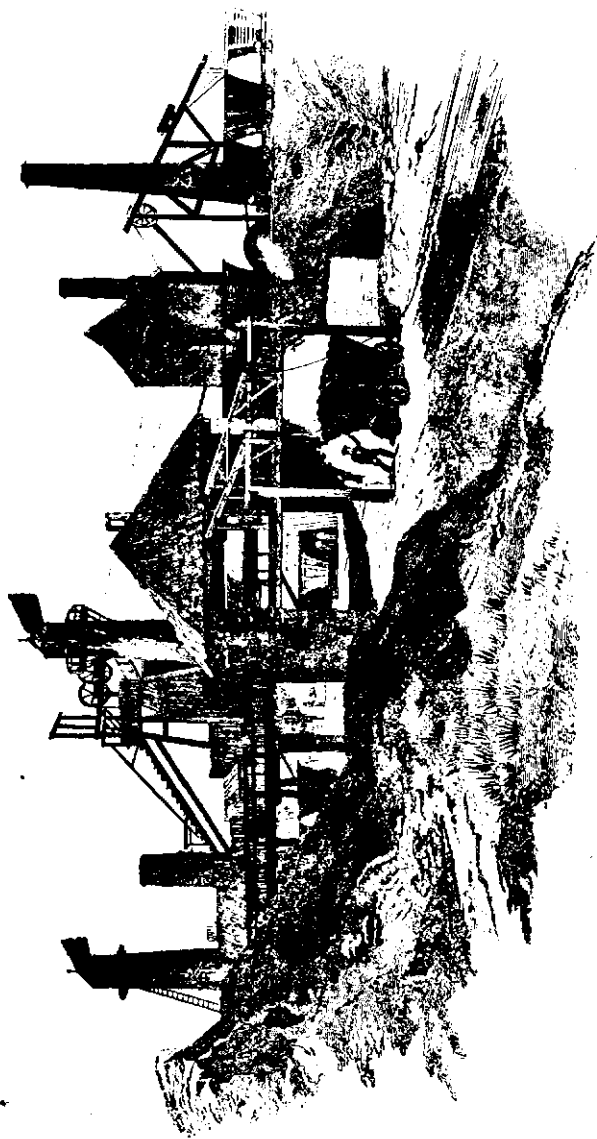
Wales. Docks at Cardiff and the laying of the Taff Vale Railway increased the facilities for export.

The history of the trade turns for a large part of the time on the attempt to secure greater safety in working. The Davy lamp won its way slowly and had several set-backs. On the one hand it was expected to do too much, and other precautions, like ventilation, were neglected, while the pits got ever deeper and more dangerous; on the other the men found it difficult to work by, and risked a naked light in order to see better. In 1835 George Stephenson held that Parliament would be justified in so much interference with individual liberty as to compel the adoption of two shafts at least in every mine. The employers thought otherwise. An important committee at South Shields, after a bad accident in 1839, declared that not nearly enough attention was paid to ventilation, and that the dangers of the fiery mines of the north were unduly great. They also recommended that Government inspectors should be appointed; this had already been done on the Continent. In 1844 Faraday drew attention to the dangers of coal-dust; in 1846 and 1847 commissions again recommended inspection. At last in 1850 came the INSPECTION OF COAL-MINES ACT, which authorized the appointment of inspectors with power to enter the mines and judge of their safety. Correct plans of the mines were to be made, and accidents notified within twenty-four hours. Five inspectors were appointed.

The Commission of 1840-2 that reported on the condition of workers in mines, and by the horrors it disclosed brought about drastic regulation, is dealt with elsewhere (see p. 498).

In 1851 the Royal School of Mines was founded, for the training of those in charge of mines was discovered to be very inadequate. The first trial mining-school in Great Britain was not founded till 1838, and was in Cornwall.

IRON. This period was not only the age of the triumph of iron, but also the birth-time of that of steel. During these forty years iron was gradually used to make an enormous number of things that previously had been made of wood or stone or had



THE COLLIERY OF THE SIXTIES. Arrangements at a Pit Shaft

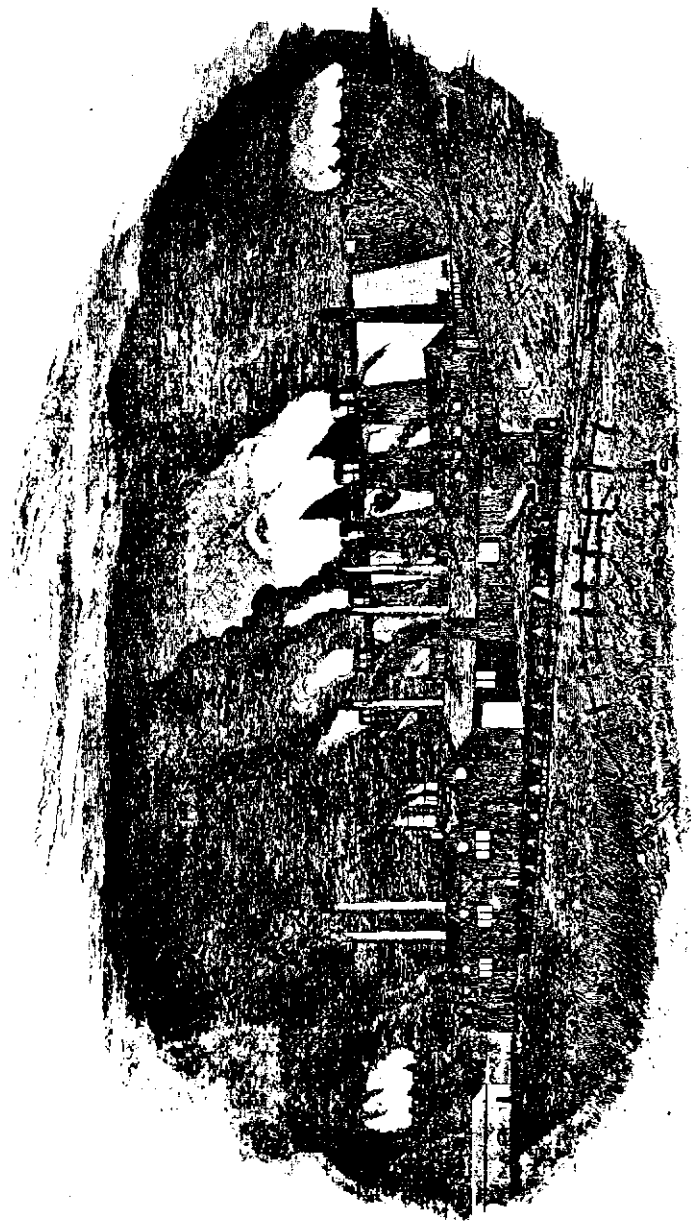
not existed, and by 1870 the limits of its powers had been reached. But all the time inventors were feeling their way to the production of a steel that should be cheap enough to take the place of iron, since it was stronger and more durable. By the end of it steel was being made which in proportion to the time it lasted was cheap enough to use instead of iron, and during the next period its use made possible engineering feats beyond the dreams of men of the sixties.

In 1840 HEATH added manganese to crucible steel while it was smelting, and so made it easier to weld. Besides this the process made possible the use of British iron, which by the older methods was not pure enough to make the best steel, and iron had been imported for that purpose. Heath's process lowered the cost of the best steel 50 per cent. Again we may note that while the inventor made millions for other people, the manufacturers combined to fight his patents, and after long litigation his widow was cheated out of the royalties.

In 1842 NASMYTH invented the steam hammer, by which the power of working iron was greatly increased. This hammer worked inside a large cylinder, fell by its own weight, and was pushed up again by the pressure of steam admitted below it. In 1845 J. P. BUDD found a use for the waste gases of the furnace in making them fire stoves, which heated the blast and so saved further fuel. About 1850 malleable iron began to be used to make boilers, bridges, rails, buildings, and ships. All this development caused new iron districts to be opened up, such as the Cleveland district in North Yorkshire, Northampton, and Derby. The first had peculiar advantages: Durham coal was at hand, the best in the world for coking, there was much ore, not rich but easily smelted, and the sea was close at hand for export or coasting trade.

The years between 1860 and 1874 saw a great increase in the size of the blast furnaces, till they reached over 100 ft. in height and a capacity of 42,500 cu. ft. In ten years the height nearly doubled, and the capacity was multiplied by six to ten. Also about 1860 the temperature of the hot blast was raised by the





CONSETT IRON WORKS, DURHAM

use of regenerative furnaces. These worked in pairs, and consisted of stoves filled with hot fire-brick through which the blast passed. While one was being used, the other was being heated. The pressure of the blast was also increased.

But the great advance of the time was the invention by HENRY BESSEMER of his method of making steel. Up to 1856 steel was hardly used except for tools and cutlery, and the best cast steel cost £50 a ton. Bessemer, the son of a French refugee (another of our debts to alien immigrants), was born in 1813, and early made a reputation as an inventor. During the Crimean War he had experimented on guns and projectiles, and received much encouragement from Napoleon III. It was soon evident that more powerful projectiles meant stronger guns, and he started on steel. His central idea was to introduce air into the fluid cast iron, whereupon the combination of the carbon in the iron with the oxygen of the air produced great heat and set the whole mass boiling. He thus got rid of the whole of the carbon and silicon and got soft iron, not steel. Eventually, after many experiments, he secured the right amount of carbon by adding a suitable proportion of spiegeleisen, a cast iron rich in manganese and carbon. But at first strange things happened; Bessemer had described his process at the 1856 meeting of the British Association, and many people immediately tried it and many failed. There was a good deal of excitement, and at last it was discovered that the people who failed were using iron with a lot of phosphorus in it. At first Bessemer tried to deal with the phosphorus, but finding he could get Swedish iron, free from phosphorus, at £7 a ton, he left it alone, and proceeded to improve the mechanical arrangements of his process. Later he found that Cumberland hematite iron was also free from phosphorus, and by 1860, after an expenditure in experiment of £20,000, the process was perfected, and has hardly been altered since. It is pleasant to note that Bessemer, while he made millions for others, was successful in making over a million for himself, and this though France, Belgium, and Germany refused him patent rights.

Steel, being thus brought within the range of practicability, began to be adopted for boiler-plates and rails. For the former its advantage in strength was obvious, but it took the railway companies some time to admit it for rails. By actually laying rails of iron and steel side by side in places of congested traffic and showing that, while iron ones lasted only a few months, steel rails did not need even to be turned after six years, the demonstration seemed sufficiently complete. But by 1880 only two-thirds of the lines of the United Kingdom were of steel, though another fifteen years made its use universal.

Ships had already been made of iron, but a writer on iron in 1864 expresses great doubt<sup>1</sup> as to the possibility of using steel for them, though two barges and one clipper ship had already been constructed. Ships for the navy were made of wood with armour plates outside, hence the term ironclads.

One other process for making steel before 1875 must be noticed. SIEMENS, the inventor of the regenerative furnace, soon adapted it to crucible steel and also to puddling. In 1867 he started making steel in Birmingham, and eventually succeeded in making it direct from pig-iron by a method still in use, and known as the open-hearth process, wherein gas and air, heated in regenerative furnaces, meet and ignite. Lastly, in 1866, Ramsbottom succeeded in making steel tyres without welding, by boring an ingot of steel and then hammering it out.

The enormous increase of iron production is shown by the figures; in 1857 England was producing from 333 blast furnaces 2,700,000 tons of pig-iron, and by 1863 about 3,000,000. At the same date the production of steel was only 40,000 tons.

**Coal Gas.** One of the greatest helps towards industrial and commercial development was the invention of means for really effective artificial lighting. The Middle Ages went to bed with the sun, and work by artificial light was forbidden, since it was almost certain to be faulty. Under the smoke pall of our industrial towns candles, or even lamps, were certain to prove inadequate, even at noon. But the coming gloom was already provided for.

<sup>1</sup> Fairbairn, *Iron, its History, &c.*, p. 314.

In 1792 William Murdoch of Redruth began experimenting with the illuminating power of gases given off by various substances, by 1797 he had been sufficiently successful with that given off by coal to exhibit it, and in 1798 he lighted a workshop in Birmingham by it. In 1801 Lebon, a Frenchman, distilled gas from wood, and in 1803 the Lyceum was lighted by coal gas.



THE TRIUMPH OF GAS. Cartoon of 1811.

In 1810 the Gas Light and Coke Co. secured its Act of Parliament, and by 1814 Westminster streets were lit by gas. Though not destined 'to put out the sun', it was very soon to 'eclipse the moon', and the new lighting quickly spread for streets and shops, though more slowly for houses. It developed most rapidly in Scotland, where cannel coal, the most productive of gas, is common.

The burners used up to 1874 were not very good and often

wasted 40 per cent. of possible illuminating power; the usual candle-power of the flat fish-tail flame was about 16, though 20 to 23 was possible. A more powerful flame had been produced in the Argand burner, giving 80-100 candle-power, but the incandescent mantle was still in the future.

Coal gas in 1874 was too expensive for heating purposes, and the manufacture was concerned only with its illuminating power. It was not till towards the end of the century, when the coming of electric light threatened to supersede gas, that the manufacturers turned their attention to the heating powers of the latter, so that its use eventually became general for cooking and frequent for warming rooms.

**Factory Legislation.** We have seen that in 1833 the first effective attempt to regulate children's work in the factories was made by appointing inspectors to see the law carried out.<sup>1</sup> Four were appointed, and the carrying out of the law was their first object. But their work was even more valuable in another way. They were instructed to make reports, which became quarterly, as to the state of affairs and condition of the people in their district. For the first time the real facts, presented by unbiased civil servants, were at the disposal of the Government. These reports soon showed various difficulties in the way of full administration of the law:

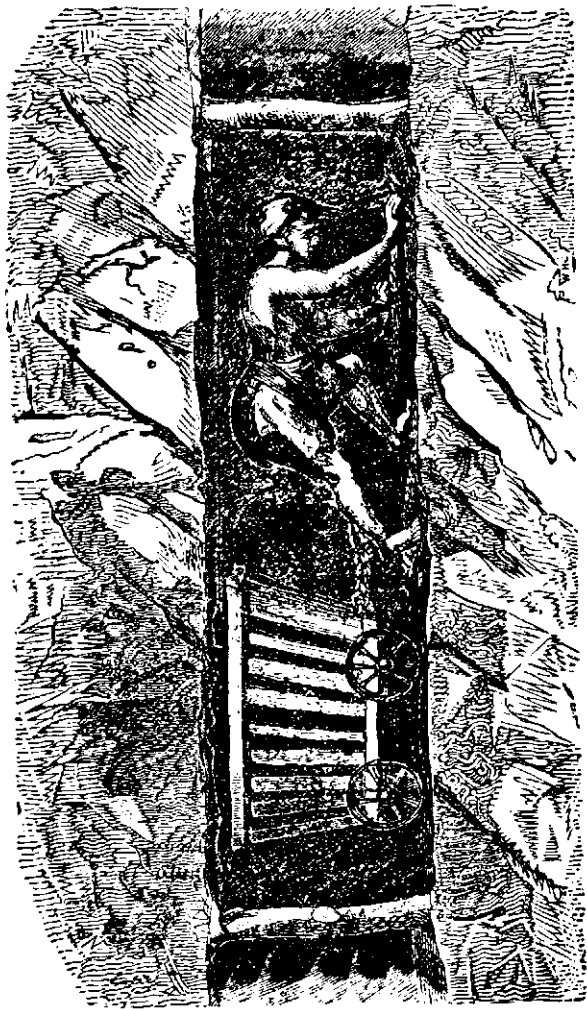
1. There was no means of finding out a child's real age if the parents chose to lie about it. Hence in 1837 REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS was made compulsory. Meanwhile the inspectors had to depend on the competence and honesty of the doctors who certified that the child had the strength and appearance of a normal child of nine. Even when these did not fail, or when the inspectors had secured that certificates should only be accepted from selected doctors, fraud was rife. It was quite possible to send one child to the doctor and a younger one to the factory; there was even sometimes a trade in certificates thus obtained. The rule as to 'young persons' was easier to enforce, because the factory lights betrayed the millowner who kept going over-long hours.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 373.

2. The complicated organization required in order that, while adults and young persons worked twelve hours a day, the children should work only eight, made all sorts of juggling possible. Some owners declined to be bothered with children at all, and the demand for 'piecers' over thirteen increased, and their wages rose from 2s. 4d. to 4s. 8d. a week; but as they were paid by the spinners and not by the masters, this only meant a decrease in net earnings to the men. But with children in relays it was impossible to detect evasions. Often the owners claimed that they kept the children eight hours and did without them the other four, a statement impossible to check.

3. The Act ordered that the children should attend school. The inspectors soon discovered that there were very few schools, and that the children could not attend such as existed since the hours of work made it impossible. Schools provided by the millowners were mostly a farce. 'Schoolmasters' who could not read, schools held in the coal-hole with the stoker as teacher in his odd moments, were among the inspectors' discoveries. They soon began to advocate a half-time system invented by some of the better masters, and above all State education. By 1840 the inspectors were in a position to say that, while a large number of mills only worked ten hours, and that in nine-tenths of them the law was kept, it was practically impossible to deal with the remaining defaulters.

In 1842 came the Commission on the Employment of Women and Children in Mines and Collieries. Their report created such horror (the condition of the mines has been already described, see p. 366) that immediate and drastic legislation followed. Thus rigid control of women's work in the mines was set up before anything at all was done for them in factories. It was shown that women worked underground generally in West Yorkshire and North Lancashire, commonly in South Lancashire, Cheshire, and South Wales. The MINES AND COLLIERIES ACT of 1842 took the enormous step of excluding women and children of both sexes altogether from the mines. Only under the shock produced by the report could so tremendous an interference with



The scandal of the coal-mines revealed by the Report of the Royal Commission, 1842. A half-naked girl drawing a loaded truck

the liberty of the individual have been carried. As it was it had considerable effect on the clauses of the Factory Act of two years later.

In 1844 the work of the inspectors for the past ten years bore its fruit. They had been pointing out that the evils of long hours were not confined to children, and that women were almost as little able to protect themselves. They had also been urging the need for more fencing of machinery where women worked. So the new Act included women in its scope. The principal clauses of the 1844 FACTORY ACT were :

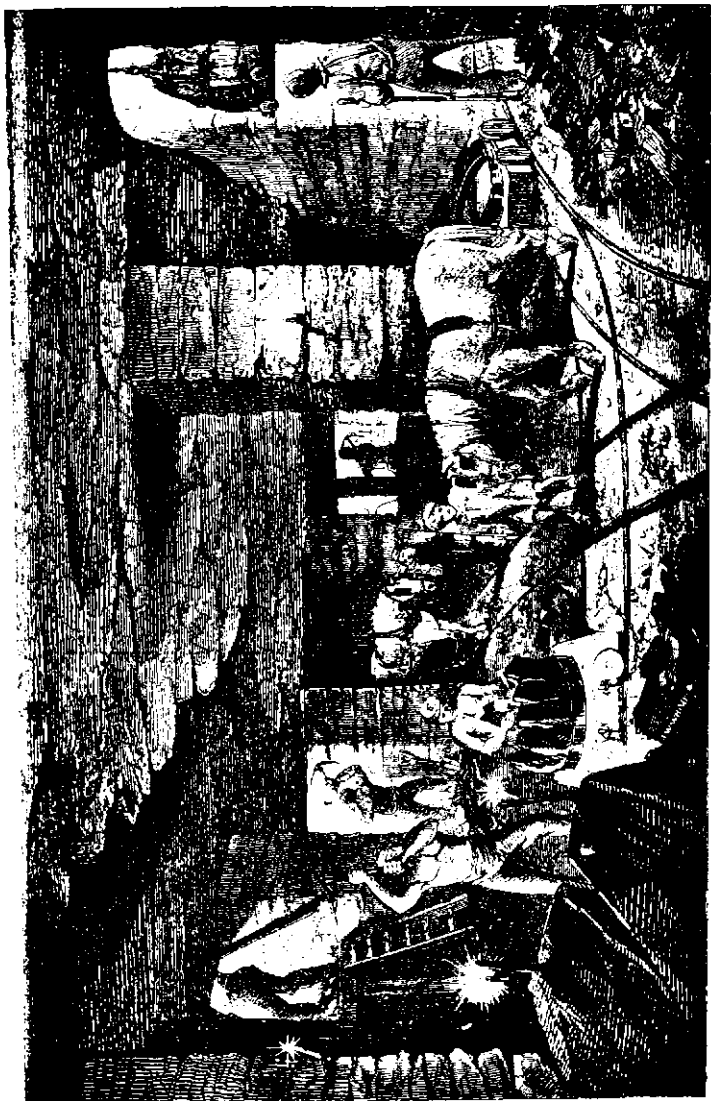
- (a) Women were included with young persons in the regulations.
- (b) Machinery was to be guarded in certain specified ways.
- (c) The half-time system for children was enacted.
- (d) The age of children employable in factories was lowered to eight.
- (e) Meal-times for women and young persons were to be at the same fixed hour for all in the factory, and the relay system to be abolished.
- (f) The power of the magistrates to interfere with the inspectors was taken away, and all regulations in future were to be made by the Secretary of State.
- (g) Complaints must be heard by two magistrates, neither of whom was a near relative of a factory occupier.
- (h) Fines for breach of the regulations were increased.
- (i) A register of the children and young persons working in the factory was to be kept.
- (j) An abstract of the Act was to be hung up in the factory, with the names and addresses of the inspectors.

The debates on this Act bring out clearly the opposing schools of thought. Those who objected to legislation maintained (1) that all the profit was made in the last hour (one of the inspectors, Mr. Kennedy, pointed out that, on the contrary, owing to fatigue, the last hour was often unprofitable); (2) that factory work was light, 'mere confinement, attention, and attendance'; (3) that there were worse abuses outside factories.

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IMPROVED CONDITIONS in 1869. Getting out the Ten-yard Coal in the Staffordshire Colliery of Bradley, near Bilston

On the other side Lord Howick formulated the true distinction between State interference to increase the wealth of a particular class or even of the whole nation, and interference to protect the labourer and the community from evils for which there was no other cure.

It is necessary at this point to go back a little and trace a movement which lay behind that for the protection of women and children. What the men workers wanted was a TEN HOURS' DAY. In face of the universal belief of the governing classes in *laissez-faire*, it was useless to hope to secure this by direct attack. The men did not like the eight hours' day for children, for it had no effect on adult time, and they hoped that, if the children's day were made ten, it would automatically result in their own being the same. After 1833, when it became evident that the inspectorate could not secure a complete observance of the law, the operatives agitated for a ten hours' day for all under twenty-one, including children, and a stoppage of machinery at fixed hours, whereby evasion would be impossible. 'Short-time Committees' were formed, and were for a time very active, but the depression after 1836 and the imprisonment of Oastler and Stephens handicapped them. In 1841 the Tories went into office, many of them pledged to legislate for a ten hours' day. The only result of their pledges was to use factory legislation as a retort to Whig Free Traders. In the Act of 1844 Ashley tried to introduce a ten hours' day clause, but failed. At the general election that followed the Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, the ten hours' men fought on that issue, and in 1847 Fielden passed the TEN HOURS ACT for Women and Young Persons with little opposition. The men had fought successfully 'behind the women's petticoats'. The argument of the 'last hour profit' was dead; trade was so bad that few mills could afford to be open ten hours. At first there was some trouble in enforcing the law. Not till 1848 was trade good enough to make the owners wish to keep overtime, and then they tried to reintroduce the relay system. In the east and south the magistrates supported the inspectors, in the Manchester district they refused, and

Leonard Horner, the inspector, had a bad time between unscrupulous masters who accused him of wanton interference and the better ones who complained that he did not protect them from unfair competition by the law-breakers. The Scottish inspectors refused to carry out the law at all. In 1849 Horner brought a test case, and the judge ruled that the Act did not say what it purported to say. So relays again became legal. The Short-time Committees re-formed, attacked Parliament, and in 1850 an Act was passed FIXING THE HOURS of protected workers between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. or 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours off for meals, and Saturday work to end at 2 p.m. Thus was established the 'normal day' for women and young persons, and in 1853 this was extended to children, whose hours until then could be spread over the time between 5.30 a.m. and 8.30 p.m.

During the struggle the masters formed an Association to defeat the carrying out of the law as to fencing machinery, which Dickens attacked as the 'Association for the Mangling of Operatives'. Its object was to get rid of the Factory Acts, but though it partly won over fencing, factory legislation went on extending. The calico printing trades came first. In 1843 there were 5,600 children under thirteen in the Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire printing works, and nearly two-thirds of them began under nine. They helped make the colours, saw the cotton was smooth on the machines, laid it in folds and spread colours on a woollen sieve. The hours were long and irregular and there was much night-work. This was regulated in 1845. In 1860 the bleaching and dyeing industry followed. Lace making in factories was partially regulated in 1861. The Commission of 1862 found much sweating in the lace-finishing industry, which was still done in the homes, and they recommended an extension of the Factory Acts to private houses and small workshops.

The Inquiry of 1861-6, in the course of its five years' investigation, brought to light many evils in many trades. In the potteries children of six, seven, and eight were employed under conditions

that made lead poisoning common. Women did 'scouring' which injured the lungs. Some of the manufacturers, e. g. Minton and Wedgwood, memorialized the Home Secretary asking for legislation, and stated that boy labour was a drag on the industry. In the match trade the horrors of phossy-jaw were exposed, and in cartridge-making there was considerable loss of life among the women and girls. In 1864 was passed the FIRST ACT which attempted to deal with a home industry. This extended the meaning of 'factory' to 'any place in which people work for hire', and applied this definition and the existing Factory Acts to several new industries. Further investigations showed the same evils in straw-plaiting, where children began at three years of age, and hosiery, where a child of 5½ was reported 'very clever, having been at it (seaming) two years; she used to stand on a stool to see up to the candle'. The Birmingham hardware industry was carried on in places of all sizes from factories to homes, and largely by children; in the clothes trades the same thing appeared, and the worst conditions were in the home industry. Obviously, control must be extended to the small workshop and the home. Here came the ACT OF 1867. This brought under control a number of new industries, and extended it to any premises in which fifty or more people were employed in *any* manufacturing process, whether specified in the Act or not. Special rules were made for dangerous trades, excluding women or young children from work such as annealing of glass and grinding metals. Ventilation and sanitation were enforced. Unfortunately, much of the good was undone by making a lot of exceptions.

In the same year (1867) the WORKSHOPS REGULATION ACT introduced regulations for places where there were less than fifty workers, unless they had previously been placed under the Factory Act of 1864. 'Employed' was to mean occupied in any handicraft, whether for wages or not. But it did not include the home worker, who took home work from an outside master. Children under eight were not to be employed, and from eight to thirteen only as half-timers. Young persons and women were employable only for twelve hours, less 1½ hours for

meals, and work to end at 2 p.m. on Saturdays. The range of possible hours was, however, larger than in factories, with the usual impossibility of detection of evasion. The control was given to the local authority. This proved to be an impossible policy, at any rate at the moment. Only a few large towns possessed a Medical Officer of Health; the administration of the health clauses was optional, so very few towns took any notice of the Act. Leicester, Nottingham, Leek, and Stafford were laudable exceptions. In 1871 the administration of the Workshop Act was handed over to the factory inspectors. This enormously increased their work, for the number of places to be inspected rose from 30,000 to 110,000, and many were in out-of-the-way places and difficult to hunt out. Even then the inspectors had no power to order bad sanitary conditions to be remedied, except in factories. 'Amid much doubt, uncertainty, and failure in insight and administrative efficiency, society was gradually groping towards the idea that found expression only a few years later: the ultimate end of factory legislation is to prescribe conditions of existence below which population shall not decline.'<sup>1</sup>

In 1874 the last Factory Act of our period reduced hours from 10½ to 10, raised the age of admission to 9 and a year later to 10, and implicitly forbade overtime.

It is obvious that a great advance had been made in forty years. That there was still plenty to do was shown by the TRUCK COMMISSION of 1871-2. Though truck had all but disappeared from the textile districts, there were parts where it was still rife. In Prescott, watchmakers in 1871 were being paid in watches, which passed from hand to hand at ever decreasing value till they reached the pawnshop. Among the navvies who built the railways, some sort of truck was inevitable in days before Government or philanthropic canteens were thought of, but as carried out it was pure exploitation of a very helpless class. The real home of truck was South Staffordshire and the Black Country, and Bilston housewives pawned flour from the truck shop to pay their rent; it took most of the forty years

<sup>1</sup> Hutchins and Harrison, *A History of Factory Legislation*, p. 172.

after the Act of 1831 to dislodge the evil, and it still survived in 1871 among the nailers and the mining butties. In South Wales, too, it was universal; there the system of monthly pays gave it its power, credit from the truck shop being essential. The Miners' Unions were constantly urging payment each week. To show how the Truck Acts were evaded, read the story of a Dudley nail-maker as told to the Commissioners of 1871. From his home workshop, a hovel with a smithy, he goes on Monday morning to buy his metal from the 'fogger'. His metal is probably the wrong kind, and he changes it at a metal-changer's (a probable relative of the fogger) at the cost of 2d. per 10d. bundle. At the end of the week he takes back the finished nails and gets 12s., which he spends at a shop near by and gets for it a selection of very bad groceries. The shop is the property of the fogger. Why does the nail-maker go there? Because if he didn't he'd get no work next week. The fogger turns over his money and his profits several times in the course of the day, and the nail-maker gets even less than the meagre earnings he has bargained for. Truck Acts are easy to evade, and it was Trade Unions rather than Parliament that made the law a reality. A recent writer has well said: 'In the nineteenth century the Trade Unions and the Trade Unions alone made the nominal earnings of the working man a cash reality.'<sup>1</sup>

**Growth of Trade Unions.** In considering the development of combination among the workers during these forty years, it is possible to distinguish four periods, each having its characteristic:

(a) 1834-43. We left the Trade Unions in 1834, after a remarkable outburst of energy, beaten, depressed, and diminishing. The nine years that followed were equally depressing. Revolutionary action was dead, though the dreams of Owen and the Socialists still survived. The effect of these dreams was shown by an arrogance on both sides that is now difficult to understand. On the one hand the employers, still terrified by the thought of revolution and outraged by the, to them, preposterous

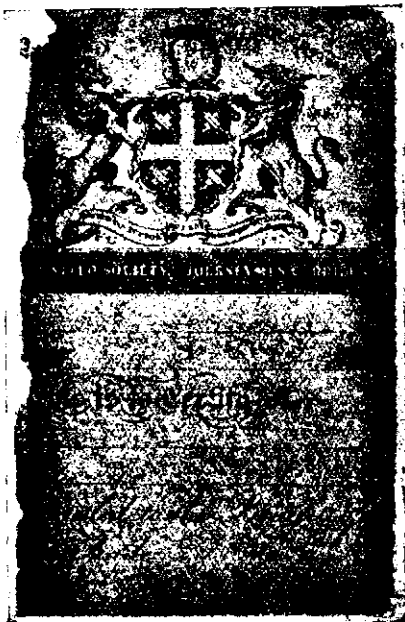
<sup>1</sup> C. R. Fay, *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 197.

claims to equality put forward by the extremer thought, asserted a counter-claim to the absolute control of their workpeople, to the point of demanding abject submission. Lord Londonderry gave peremptory orders to the traders of 'his town of Seaham' to cease to give credit to the miners on strike 'against their proprietors and masters'.

Consciously or unconsciously the claim was made that capital should own the labourer. On the other hand the workers, still fired by the dream of an immediate and instantaneous change to a state when all men should be equal, grouped into voluntary associations of producers enjoying 'the whole product of their labour', took a tone of hauteur and contempt that was only not ridiculous because of the tragedy beneath. This bumptiousness of expression rather than any real fact was the cause of the early tirades against 'the tyranny

of the Unions', and even this audacity was confined to occasional outbursts. The Unions were indeed far from being able to exercise as yet such 'tyranny' as would even make them blackleg-proof.

With the exception of the great strike of the Glasgow cotton spinners in 1838 and the trial of its five leaders for conspiracy, intimidation, and murder, the years from 1837 to 1840 showed a steady decline in Trade Union activity. An attempt by



TRADE UNION CARD OF THE CURRIERS

O'Connell to use the irregularities of the Glasgow Unions to discredit the whole movement and secure its repression failed, but the interest of the manual workers gradually turned from industrial to political action, and the Chartist propaganda<sup>1</sup> absorbed most of their energies. The Trade Unions, such as survived, did not directly take part in the agitation, though occasionally an angry strike would be turned into an attempt at rebellion through the influence of 'physical force' Chartists. It was the time of the 'hungry forties', and sullen despair or violent rebellion seemed the only alternatives.

(b) 1843-69. During these years the foundations of real Trade Unionism were laid. The leaders, better educated and more practical, began to build by limiting their activities. They concentrated on working for the removal of their chief legal and industrial disabilities. Above all they set out to study the facts and the forces they were up against. They realized that no recognition was yet possible for the claim to equality or of the right of labour to be a first charge on industry. They adopted middle-class economics and were more intent on establishing their respectability than their power. It was a very necessary schooling, and, though it left behind some disadvantages, yet when the years of prosperity came after 1850 the men and their leaders were ready to use them. The chief changes may be summarized as follows :

1. *The movement to get knowledge.* Libraries were formed and classes for mutual instruction; trade journals were issued by the potters in 1843, by the machine-makers soon after, and by the bookbinders in 1850. In the same year the flint-glass makers issued the first number of their magazine, which is still in existence. According to the Commissioners of 1850 a translation of Plato's *Republic* was much read among the Northumbrian miners, 'principally for the socialism it contains', ignorant, the Commissioners suppose, of Plato's later modifications and Aristotle's destructive criticism. Perhaps the miners, like some others, preferred Plato in his prime to Plato in his old age, and did not rate Aristotle's economics very highly.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 564.



2. *The growth of paid officials.* This was due to the more permanent character of the new Unions and their concerns as Friendly Societies. The business became too large for men to carry out in their spare time, and officials on full-time salaries became essential.

3. *A strong tendency to discourage strikes,* especially at the will of local branches. These abortive small strikes drained the funds of the societies and effected nothing.

4. *A sustained resistance to legal oppression.* W. P. Roberts, a solicitor, first employed by the Northumberland and Durham miners, became the salaried legal adviser of the Unions and fought their cases up and down the country. It became much more difficult for ignorant magistrates to put their own wishes or ideas in place of the law. Even when a case was hopeless, it paid the workers to put up a fight, if only to show up the injustices of the legal code.

The years 1843-7 saw the foundation of a number of new Unions or revivals of old ones. The potters, the cotton spinners, the printers, the flint-glass makers, all formed permanent associations. The most important was the Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, formed in 1841. This was a federation of two strong county associations, and, under the leadership of Martin Jude, by 1844 it represented nearly all the mining districts of Great Britain and claimed a membership of 100,000. It was this association that fought the miners' strike of 1844, and was practically ruined by it. In 1845 a National Association of Trade Unions was formed, which lasted fifteen years, though (its period of real activity was about six. It was not quite a national Trades Union, such as was attempted in 1830-4, and lacked the concentration of the later Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress. It helped largely in winning the Ten Hours Act of 1847, but, like all the earlier attempts at national organization, it was ruined by having to support sectional strikes that it had not authorized.

The new type of Union really made its appearance with the formation of the AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS in 1851. The development in machinery had brought into exist-

hence a new class of worker which rapidly divided into sub-classes as each process became more technical. These sub-classes formed in each district numerous small Friendly Societies, the iron-founders alone having a national organization. After 1836 there came talk of amalgamation, and in 1848 William Newton, a leading member of the Journeymen Steam-Engine and Machine Makers and Millwrights' Friendly Society, set about amalgamating the London societies. He was not a full-time official, had lost his job as foreman, owing to his Trade Union activities, and had opened a public-house. In 1848 William Allan became general secretary of the society, which was the largest and most wealthy trade society of the time. He and Newton worked together to win over the smaller societies, and in March 1850 the Lancashire societies called a meeting, at which they carried their scheme in outline. Six months later, at another meeting in Birmingham, the scheme was definitely adopted. With the utmost skill Newton and Allan persuaded the smaller societies that they were coming in as equals, while the new society took over the constitution and scheme of benefits of the original Journeymen Society referred to above. It added a sick benefit and emigration benefit, together with a definite trade policy of restricting overtime and preventing piece-work; it created district committees and established a new scale of strike pay of 15s. a week. The AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS, MACHINISTS, SMITHS, MILLWRIGHTS, AND PATTERN MAKERS started in 1851 with 5,000 members, and for a few months its success was uncertain. One whole society, the Society of Steam-Engine Makers, did not come in till 1919. But by October 1851 the success of the Amalgamated Society was assured; it had 11,000 members paying a weekly 1s. subscription, and seriously alarmed the employers. It secured the end of overtime and of the employment of unskilled men in Oldham, and even when a general demand for the abolition of piece-work and of systematic overtime was met by a general lock-out and the owners won, owing to the unorganized condition of the labourers, the new society stood the shock and emerged neither bankrupt nor shaken. The men adopted new tactics: the owners 'presented the docu-

ment',<sup>1</sup> the men signed and—remained members of the Union. They claimed that a pledge given under duress was no pledge.

The A.S.E. was to be the 'new model' for other societies, and its chief characteristics were :

1. It was an exclusive society of skilled workers.
2. Its combination of trade policy and friendly benefits gave it large reserve funds and consequent stability.
3. The branches were nominally autonomous as far as the friendly benefits were concerned, but they were required to work within strict rules which could not easily be altered.
4. All trade policy, including strike pay, was entirely in the hands of the central executive.

It is obvious that the control was strong. At the end of the year the reserve funds were equalized among the branches, by leaving them so much per member each. One other characteristic marked a new departure, a policy of publicity as against the old secrecy. By 1861 the A.S.E. had doubled its members and accumulated £73,398.

From 1850 the prosperity of the times allowed the Trade Unions to develop peacefully along the new lines. In 1853 the present Lancashire Cotton Spinners' Association began its career, and the cotton weavers secured the 'Blackburn List' of piece-work rates that regulated their wages. The cotton workers' associations were purely trade organizations, without friendly benefits.

At the end of the fifties came the falling off of trade, and strikes became frequent. The builders' strike of 1859-60 called out the full force of the movement. The men had asked for a nine-hours' day. One firm, Messrs. Trollope, dismissed one of the men who presented the request, and the other workers for the firm struck. The masters replied by a general lock-out throughout London. Evidently they were still of the mind of 1830, for they refused to meet the Union and presented the 'document'. The result was to call into the fight the organized

<sup>1</sup> See p. 380.

workers of the country, and £23,000 was subscribed by the other Unions. The battle was eventually drawn: the masters withdrew the 'document', the hours remained the same. The carpenters, however, had learnt a lesson, and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters was the result. It began in 1860, and in 1862 elected Robert Applegarth its general secretary; in a few years its position was second to that of the engineers.

(c) 1860-71. The activities of these years centre round a remarkable group of men, officials of the larger societies, who so completely dominated the workers' world that they have been called the JUNTA. They were William Allan, whom we have already met, an Ulster Scot, methodical and cautious even to red-tape and miserliness, but the backbone of the organization; Robert Applegarth (still alive in 1924), a Yorkshireman with a lawyer's brain, who was the conciliatory leader disarming prejudices, a great believer in education, and the acknowledged representative of labour in the political world; Daniel Guile and Edwin Coulson, men of considerable business capacity; and George Odger, a Cornishman with the gift of the orator. Their policy combined extreme caution in trade matters with energetic action for political reforms. They had little faith in the power of the Unions to affect wages as a whole, they worked to keep the standard of all up to the level that the best masters conceded voluntarily. Their main attention was given to the levelling down of political privileges and the opening up of educational and social advantages to all. They worked for extension of the franchise, amendment of the law of master and servant, regulation of mines, national education, and the full legalization of Trade Unions.

They accepted, with perfect good faith, the economic Individualism of their middle-class opponents, and claimed only that freedom to combine which the more enlightened of that class were willing to concede them. Their genuine if somewhat restrained enthusiasm for political and industrial freedom gave them a persistency and determination that no check could discourage. Their understanding of the middle-class point of view, and their appreciation of the practical difficulties of the situation, saved them from being mere demagogues. For the

next ten years, when it was all-important to obtain a legal status for trade societies and to obliterate the unfortunate impression created by the Sheffield outrages, their qualities exactly suited the emergency. The possession of good manners, though it may seem a trivial detail, was not the least of their advantages. To perfect self-respect and integrity they added correctness of expression, habits of personal propriety, and a remarkable freedom from all that savoured of the tap-room. In Allan and Applegarth, Guile, Coulson, and Odger, the traducers of Trade Unionism found themselves confronted with a combination of high personal character, exceptional business capacity, and a large share of that official decorum which the English middle class find so impressive.<sup>1</sup>

Another outcome of the builders' strike was the formation of TRADES COUNCILS. These are bodies in each great town representing all the organized trades of the town. The London Trades Council of this time was successful in preventing the use of soldiers as blacklegs and took an active part in the agitation for an extended franchise. (In 1867 the town artisan secured the vote.)

Our attention is next called to the agitation against the law of master and servant. In 1860 the position was this:

- (a) If a master broke a contract he was liable to be summoned for damages; if an employee broke his, he could be arrested on a warrant for a criminal offence and imprisoned.
- (b) As a consequence it followed that a master could give evidence on his own behalf, the employee could not.
- (c) A single justice could issue the warrant.
- (d) The man had no right of appeal.

That these laws, relics of old statutes, were not dead is shown by as many as 10,339 cases of breach of contract brought into the courts in one year. An agitation started in 1864 secured a Select Committee to inquire in 1866, and in 1867 the MASTER AND SERVANT ACT removed the worst injustices.

At the same time there was a strong middle-class movement to get rid of Trade Unionism. The masters took to sympathetic

<sup>1</sup> Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, pp. 239-40.

lock-outs of the whole trade, and there was some talk of ending the Unions by law. Their case was strengthened by a series of outrages among the Sheffield grinders, and a cry for full investigation arose. The Trade Unions joined in the demand, and in 1867 a ROYAL COMMISSION was appointed. It is necessary at this point to explain the legal position of the Trade Unions. After 1825 they were no longer illegal, but they had no status, and could not take action as corporate bodies, e. g. they could not protect their funds from fraud. In 1855 they had secured a clause in the Friendly Societies Act that appeared to enable Trade Unions to register informally as Friendly Societies, and then call on the magistrates to settle disputes between them and their members. This seemed to protect them against defaulting officials. In 1867 a decision of the courts denied this, and the judges went farther by pronouncing that, though not criminal since 1825, they were so far 'contrary to public policy' as to be illegal under Common Law. Here were the Unions back again in the old position, at the mercy of the employers and of the dishonesty of their own servants. It was all-important first to convince the Commission that the Unions were highly respectable bodies of great public value, and then to secure their status by legislation. The Junta were fortunate in adding to their own abilities those of a group of middle-class men, Frederic Harrison, E. S. Beesley, Tom Hughes (of *Tom Brown's School Days*), Henry Crompton, and others. With their help they secured the presence on the Royal Commission, not of a working man—that was unthinkable—but of Frederic Harrison, as their nominee. They succeeded in bringing out the fact that the larger Unions at any rate were opposed to all violence, were primarily insurance societies, and had for trade policy merely the building up of such financial reserves as would enable the men to set a reserve price on their labour. The employers succeeded in showing that some Unions, notably the builders', did restrict output, apprentices, &c., but they foolishly took up an out-of-date position of objecting to all combination. They also concentrated their attack on the big Unions, where

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Printed by W. N. PEARCE, 82, Digheth, Birmingham.—The Cheapest Song Warehouse in England.

IN taking of my walks on a cold winter's day,  
As through the Collier's country I wended my way,  
I overheard a Collier Lad most bitterly he cried,  
O how I rue the day that my poor father died

My father he worked in those pits here hard by,  
When he did get good wages we had no need to cry,  
But now the case is altered, the want of bread we know  
And soon unto the workhouse we shall be forced to go.

Myself and my poor brother in the morning we did go,  
To work upon the coal-pit's bank all in the frost and  
snow,  
The little that we both do earn is needless for to tell,  
It will scarcely serve the one of us, the masters pay  
so well.

When my father he was living no tommy-shops were  
there,  
He did receive good wages, and all things went on fair,  
And when on Saturday he come home, he to my mo-  
ther said,  
Come let us go up into the town and buy our children  
bread.

But now the masters have the power to do just as  
they please,  
And the Colliers he must labour hard, whilst they sit  
at home at ease,  
And when their labour it is done the master thus will  
say,  
You will not get your full amount of wages paid to-day.

One and sixpence for a good day's work it was a Col-  
lier's due,  
But now he thinks himself well off if he gets more  
than two,  
And if he grumbles at the price the master thus will say  
To the workhouse with your children, and there get  
better pay.

The masters reap the benefit of all the Colliers do,  
By forcing from them much more than what's their due  
He does not think how they can live, and little does  
he care,  
As long as all his work is done, they may live on the  
air.

To the tommy-shop they are forced to go for all that  
they do eat,  
They are forced to take their wages out in bread and  
cheese and meat,  
And when on Saturday they do go their wages to get  
paid,  
The master says the tommy do not forget to-day.

If the Queen and all her Ministers they all were for-  
to come,  
To live as these poor Colliers do, & work underground,  
And undergo the hardships and dangers of the fire,  
I think they'd make the Masters pay them better for  
their hire.

If Johnny Russell he was here and work'd upon the  
bank,  
And Albert he was doggy, 'cause he's of higher rank,  
I think one week would settle them, and cause them  
thus to say,  
Let these poor Collier's have their rights, and give  
them better pay.

But when I do grow up a man if they don't better pay,  
I'll go and be a soldier for thirteen-pence a day,  
Before I'll work in those dark pits, and others for to  
share  
The benefit of what I earn in tommy shops and beer.

But if any one's offended at what I now have said,  
I only ask to give me work that I may earn my bread,  
And pay us well when we have done, and then you  
soon shall see  
We do not sit at home and pine, in want and misery.

A BROADSIDE OF THE 'HUNGRY FORTIES'

it could be met, and not on the smaller and more aggressive ones, where defence would have been more difficult. A synchronous inquiry into the Sheffield outrages showed that some of the Unions were involved, but that violence was not general among the organized labourers of the country. The Commission reported inconclusively, but the minority report by Harrison, Hughes, and the Earl of Lichfield put the case for the Union very clearly.

Meanwhile the artisan got his vote and proceeded to use it, and the Government after three years' pressure produced in 1871 a Bill legalizing Trade Unions, securing their funds, and at the same time protecting them from harassing attacks from outside by exempting them from liability to be sued in the courts. But they added a clause that practically abolished the industrial power of the Unions, by making illegal the mildest attempt to induce a man to leave his job. He might strike, but if he attempted the only means by which a strike could succeed, he would run foul of the law. The Junta set out to meet this new attack by organizing a great Trade Union Congress, which met while the Bill was before the House. In spite of very great efforts all they could win was a separation of the two parts of the Bill, and while the TRADE UNION ACT made them legal bodies, the CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT made all useful activity a crime. That the law was no dead letter was shown in the same year, when seven women were sent to prison for saying 'Bah!' to a blackleg, and meanwhile the employers freely used black-lists and character notes.

(d) 1871-5. This was one of the great periods of expansion in the Trade Union movement. Let us first follow up the political side to its triumph. In 1874 the Liberal Government was routed and a Conservative took its place, more or less pledged to repeal the obnoxious Act of 1871. What was more, the first two working-class members, Thomas Burt and Alexander Macdonald, entered the House. In 1875, after some pressure, the Government fulfilled their pledges, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871 was unconditionally repealed. The Conspiracy and



Protection of Property Act set limits to the application of the conspiracy law to trade disputes, and the Master and Servant Act was replaced by an EMPLOYERS AND WORKMEN'S ACT. By this both became parties to a civil contract, imprisonment for breach of it was abolished, and peaceful picketing definitely allowed. Lastly, no act by a group was punishable henceforth, unless the same act by an individual could be penalized. By this great victory labour stood at length upright in a modern world, the last legal chains of the villein were broken.

The victory had of course its price. The absorption of the leaders of the great societies in the all-important political battle, coupled with the enormous work of their great insurance schemes, left them no time for a forward industrial policy, and these big associations practically ceased to function on that side. Their adoption of the middle-class economics and outlook tended to make them less aggressive, and was besides to land them in the awkward inconsistency of basing their claims on the liberty of the worker to combine, while they were not prepared really, and their followers were still less so, to allow, if they could help it, the 'liberty' of the workman to stand out of the workers' Unions. As a result the forward industrial policy was taken up by other trades, and the centre of Trade Unionism shifted out of London to the North and Midlands, though not to ~~one~~ special city. The concentration of the last fifteen years was split, and sectional interests tended to predominate. For the miners and the cotton operatives were again coming to the fore. From 1856 to 1863 Alexander Macdonald had worked to establish a National Miners' Union. Their aims were (a) an eight hours' day, (b) the appointment of check-weighers to see the miner was not cheated of his earnings. In 1860 they secured the second by a MINES REGULATION ACT, and though the masters evaded it, another Act in 1872 strengthened the position of the miners, and eventually in 1887 it was secured. In the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress of 1871 Macdonald was chairman. The cotton workers had also secured progress; they had won the battle of the piece-work rates, and then set

out to secure a fifty-four hours' week, an advance on the Ten Hours' Act of 1847<sup>1</sup>; in 1875 they gained one of 56½, nominally for women and children, actually for all.

We must notice the difference between these societies and those of the engineers and carpenters. (1) The former had no benefit funds; (2) they were organized in strong federated branches and with no central funds; (3) they produced a special class of official, trained men versed in the technicalities of the trade, masters of all the details of wage adjustments; (4) their first concern was the raising of the standard of life of their members.

These industrial and parliamentary successes produced great elation, and there was an immediate expansion. The story of the agricultural labourers has been told,<sup>2</sup> the engineers secured a fifty-four hours' week, the shipbuilders fifty-one. In 1872 the Trade Union Congress had represented 375,000 workers, in 1874 it stood for a million. In alarm the employers formed, in 1873, a National Federation of Associated Employers of Labour. Another development was the creation of Boards of Conciliation and Arbitration all over the country. But again progress was bought at a price, and this time a heavy one. Many of the men's leaders, in their efforts to convince the employers, came to adopt the capitalist view that wages should depend on prices, and accepted sliding-scales based on this axiom. Some saw the danger, and urged that there should be a minimum, below which wages should not fall, and when the era of prosperity ended, and in 1875 came bad trade and low prices, it was seen that they were right, while those who had accepted sliding-scales had given away a point of the greatest strategic importance in the battle to maintain a decent standard of life for the workers.

**The Evolution of Capitalism.** During these forty years there was a steady increase in the size of businesses and the amount of capital required in them, but the rate of advance differed greatly in different industries. On the whole it is true that industries to which machinery can be applied are most economic-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 502.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 480

ally run on a large scale. During these forty years we find a rapid increase in the size of business, in the amount of capital involved, and of labour employed in cotton, machine making, and in iron-works. In cotton between 1856 and 1885, while the output doubled, the number of factories did not rise 20 per cent., but their average size rose 50 per cent. The wool industry did not so easily adjust itself, as we have seen, and we are nearly at 1860 before the power-loom is predominant, and even to-day a certain amount of hand-weaving survives. Steam-power was used in the lace trade after 1840, but the machinery is delicate and complex, and needs much skilled labour. Frame-knitting became a factory trade about 1860. In these the concentration of capital in large units proceeded more slowly. In the Sheffield cutlery, in agricultural, and in some mining districts the concentration was still slower. In mining, while the Northumberland and Durham collieries were in the hands of large capitalists or of companies, those of Lancashire and Staffordshire were on a small scale, worked by men with little capital. Capitalism in the nineteenth century meant direct employment, steam-power, and large-scale industry; none of these was universal before 1870.

Another aspect of modern capitalism was only slowly appearing. Joint-stock enterprises with salaried directors and managers were few before 1844, and until the legalization of Limited Liability in 1855 could not develop. The typical business unit of the time was one managed and owned by a single man or small group of men, who supplied both the capital to start it and the brains to run it. Capitalist and entrepreneur were one. It is important to realize this, because it accounts for the conviction of the time that the capitalist was the fulcrum on which the whole thing turned. The early and mid-Victorian, when he talked of the owner of capital, did not mean the man who bought shares in a business over whose management he had no control, and who had no connexion with it beyond drawing his dividends. After 1855 such people began to increase in number, but they were neither typical nor numerous. There was still a human

tie between master and worker, even when it was one of tyrant and slave—the wage-earner was not yet faced to any extent by an inanimate abstraction, 'the claim of the shareholders'.

During the period the amount of capital required in any business in proportion to the labour employed also increased, and more of this capital went into fixed machinery and buildings. In the early part of the century, as we have seen, it was fairly easy for a man with a few hundred pounds to start in a small way and become rich. As the years went on this became increasingly difficult. The consequence was the formation of a permanent proletariat, with little hope of rising above wage-earning. In each decade the gulf between capitalist and wage-earner gets wider.

**Co-operation.** It is necessary at once to make a clear distinction between co-operative production and co-operative distribution. In the former the members band together into a workshop or factory and combine to produce goods, the profits on the sale being distributed among the workers; thus capitalist and worker are one. In the latter the members merely combine to supply themselves with their current needs of food, clothing, &c., gaining the advantage of wholesale purchase and the elimination of middlemen.

After the failure of co-operative communities according to the dream of Owen, the next venture in co-operative production came from the Christian Socialists. This belongs to the early fifties, and took the form of small self-governing workshops. They did not succeed, partly from over-guidance from the promoters and consequent loss of initiative, partly from the ignorance and lack of education of the members. By 1855 the attempt was recognized to have failed.

The story of co-operative distribution is far different. As early as 1785 we find an attempt being made by a band of consumers to supply themselves with food and clothes, and so avoid the tyranny of the truck shop, and in 1833 there were said to be in existence 400 co-operative societies. In 1844 came the ROCHDALE PIONEERS, who opened in Toad Lane the store

that has served as a model for all future development. They set out to establish a retail shop for clothes, provisions, &c., to build a bakery, houses, and recreation rooms for the members. The principle of the retail store was sale at market prices with cash payments and a return of the profits to members in proportion to their purchases. Thus if the profits at the end of the year proved to be 2s. 6d. on every £1 turnover, then each member was credited with 2s. 6d. on every £1 in value he had purchased. This system was later adopted by all co-operative societies, and is the characteristic of the movement. It was soon found that it would be desirable for the retail stores to produce some goods as well as sell them. Hence arose bakeries, corn-mills, tailors' workshops, and boot and shoe factories. The advantages of such stores are obvious :

(a) The consumer controls his own supplies, he cuts out the middleman's profits.

(b) He is saved the loss, common to retail trade, of speculative buying. The ordinary shop has to rely on itself to judge whether there is a sale for such or such an article; the co-operative store only buys what its members have notified it that they want, for the directors are a directly elected committee of its members. Consequently, a well-managed co-operative store need have no surplus stock that has to be sold off at reduced prices. Also it is saved much in advertisement and window dressing.

(c) Some of the expenses of management are saved by the voluntary service of the controlling committee.

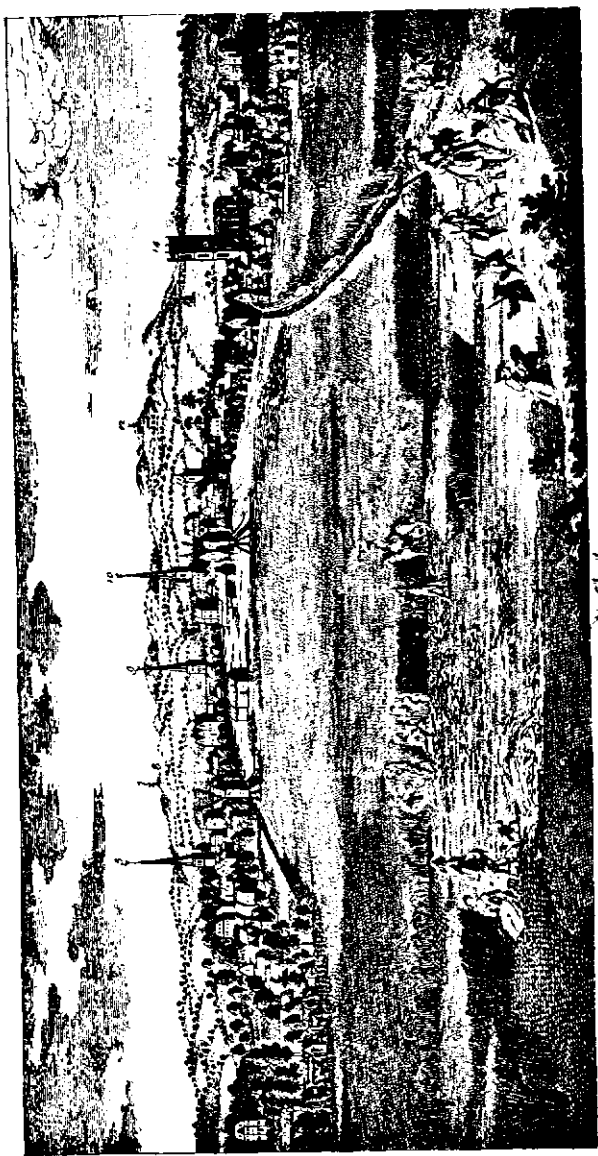
The 'sale at market price' has the advantage of ensuring that there is no loss, such as might occur if attempts were made to estimate cost price and sell at that. All profits eventually get back to the purchaser. The plan also avoids some friction with rival tradesmen. The allocation of profit according to the amount of purchase is obviously the only fair way, the net result being that the consumer gets his article at nearly cost price. The 'dividend' is also a great attraction, as a means of saving almost unconsciously, and being allowed to accumulate

makes it of more use. A pound at Christmas is worth a lot more than 160 scattered three-halfpences.

But co-operative societies are more than a mere device for getting necessaries cheaper. They have a social value of increasing weight. They provide a school of self-government for a class that has difficulty in getting it elsewhere; this is especially the case for its women members. It also makes cash payments familiar to weekly wage-earners, whose money is often so near the margin of possible existence that the temptation to live on credit is almost irresistible. Besides this it gives opportunities for thrift and for investment to people whose means are too small for the ordinary avenues. Lastly, the co-operative movement has thrown itself into education and formed libraries and classes and recreative activities for its members.

This, however, is to look rather far ahead, for at first the societies suffered from legal disabilities. They were not illegal like Trade Unions, and the most uncompromising Tory could hardly object to the workers organizing their own supplies in a competitive world. But they had no legal existence, and could neither invest as corporate societies nor protect their funds. In 1846 they were allowed to register as Friendly Societies; in 1852 they gained a legal personality and the right to sell to non-members. Lastly, in 1862 they were allowed limited liability and to invest in other societies to any amount.

The Act of 1862 made possible the formation of Wholesale Co-operative Societies to supply the retail ones, and in 1863 the present C.W.S., the CO-OPERATIVE WHOLESALE SOCIETY, was formed. The shareholders of this are not individuals, but the retail Co-operative Societies, and the directors are elected by them. At first the Wholesale Society was only a merchant buying supplies in the ordinary market but on a large scale. In 1873 the first productive department, the Crumpsall Biscuit Works, was opened, and this side has since been greatly developed. The C.W.S. now owns concerns as far apart as Denmark (a bacon factory) and Australia (a tallow and oil factory). It has also become banker and insurance company for itself and the stores.



*THE SOUTH PROSPECT OF LEICESTER*

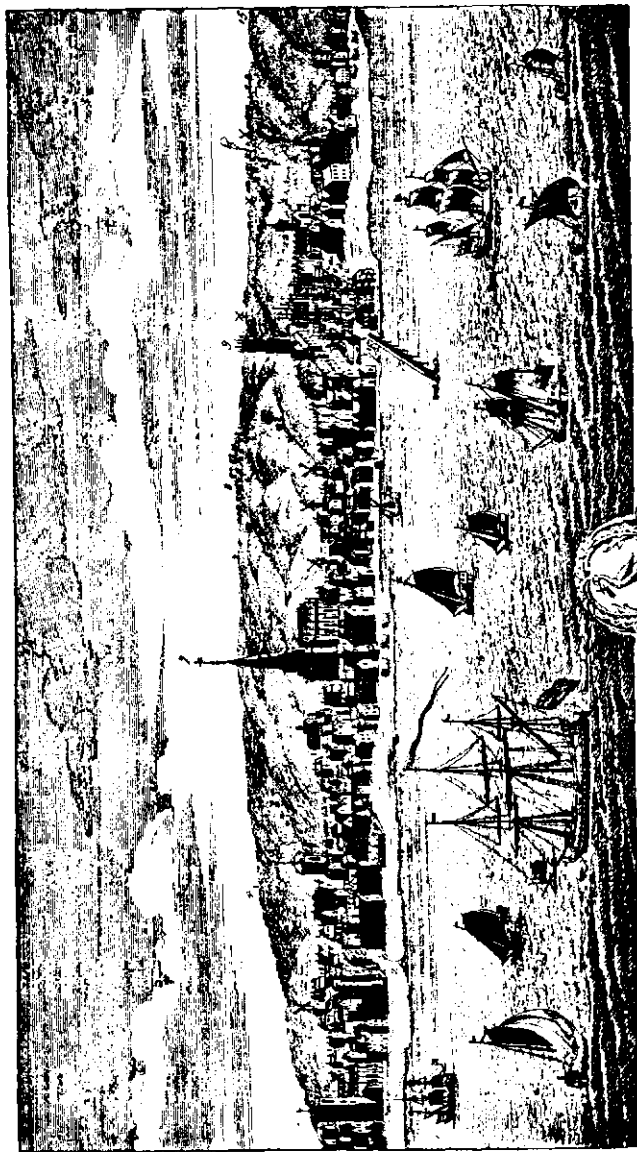
*From The Universal Magazine, 1752*

These latter developments occurred after 1874, but we may perhaps complete the story here, since the methods remained the same. By 1906 the capital of the British retail stores was £27,000,000, and the total educational grants of all societies £83,000.

**Development of the Towns.** We have not taken a look at our English towns since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Let us do so now. We shall not look in quite the same directions. Then the great towns were London, Bristol, Norwich, York, and Gloucester; by 1840 there were many others grown to more importance, and some that were practically new. They were nearly all in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the Black Country round Birmingham. The new great towns were of two classes: old boroughs that had entirely outgrown their mediaeval organization and new towns that had never been boroughs, or in some instances more than villages. In both cases they had grown in a manner highly haphazard. People ran up a factory wherever land was cheap or power at hand. A gathering of hovels rose round it, ill built, unventilated, undrained. Later, as more factories grew on the outskirts of the old towns, whole areas were covered by speculative builders and landlords with rows on rows of similar erections. They were often built back to back, with no possibility of ventilation, often half underground. Hence arose the huge slum areas of our industrial towns. The following description of Manchester, taken from the evidence of a doctor, given before a Committee on the Health of Towns in 1840, describes a typical case:

‘Until 12 years ago there was no paving or sewerage Act in any of the townships: even in the township of Manchester, containing in the year 1831 upwards of 142,000 inhabitants, this was the case; . . . at the present time the paving of streets proceeds rapidly in every direction and great attention is given to the drains. . . . Manchester has no building Act, and hence, with the exception of certain central streets, over which the Police Act gives the Commissioners power, each proprietor builds as he pleases. New cottages, with or without cellars, huddled together row behind row, may be seen springing up in





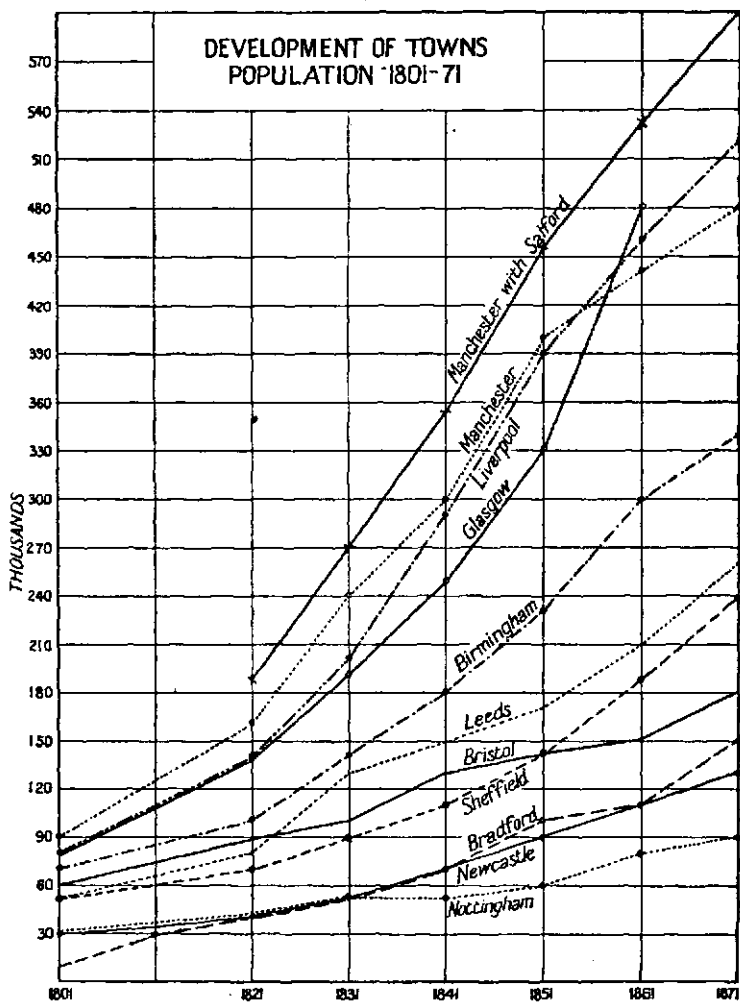
THE SOUTH WEST PROSPECT OF LIVERPOOL.

From *The Universal Magazine*, 1751

many parts, but especially in the township of Manchester, where the land is higher in price than the land for cottage sites in other townships is. With such proceedings as these the authorities cannot interfere. A cottage now may be badly drained, the streets may be full of pits, brimful of stagnant water, the receptacle of dead cats and dogs, yet no one may find fault. The number of cellar residences . . . is very great in all quarters of the town; and even in Hulme, a large portion of which consists of cottages recently erected, the same practice is continued. That it is an evil must be obvious on the slightest consideration, for how can a hole underground of from 12 to 15 feet square admit of ventilation so as to fit it for human habitation? . . . Manchester has no public park or other grounds where the population can walk and breathe the fresh air. New streets are rapidly extending in every direction, and so great already is the expansion of the town, that those who live in the most populous quarters can seldom hope to see the green face of nature. . . . In this respect Manchester is disgracefully defective; more so perhaps than any other town in the empire. Every advantage of nature has been sacrificed to the getting of money in the shape of ground rents.'

Up to the passing of the MUNICIPALITIES ACT in 1835 there was much excuse for the muddle. Only corporate towns were in a position to do anything, and even they required special private Acts in each case. Bristol took power in 1806 to have street lamps, to make sewers, and pave streets. It began to light by gas in 1819. Norwich had secured lighting powers before 1806, and in that year obtained the further power to pave streets, make sewers and cesspools, have watchmen, cleanse street surfaces, and deal with projecting houses. Its improvement rate was limited to 4s. on half the annual rent, and if the poor rate exceeded 5s. 6d. the improvement rate was to be cut to 3s. Leeds in 1790 secured power to provide a water supply; this was very unusual. Birmingham obtained an Act in 1812 giving it certain control of builders and forbidding any new buildings to be thatched. Sweeping and cleansing footways was placed on the inhabitants of the houses, though they might compound for it; steam-engines were to consume their own smoke. Manchester was not a corporate town, and there the

# DEVELOPMENT OF TOWNS POPULATION 1801-71



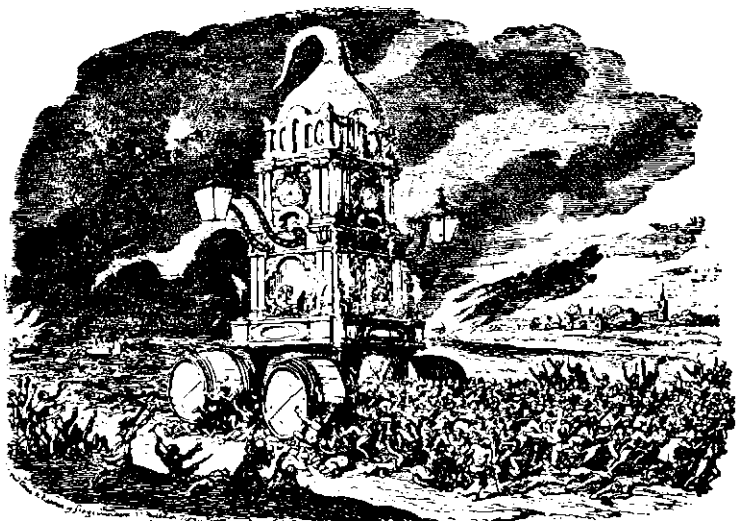
earliest Improvement Act was 1826, and it only referred to one township, Ardwick.

Disease was of course rampant, where thousands lived herded together without sanitation. Small-pox deaths were 102, 88, and 92 per thousand deaths in the last three decades of the eighteenth century, and 73, 43, and 35 in the first three of the nineteenth, so even the beginnings of improvements in hygiene told considerably. Typhus and jail fever were common, cholera a frequent visitor.

The regulation of the drink trade is instructive. Between 1787 and 1815 the justices had made great and successful efforts to control the traffic, but after 1815 free trade in ale and ale-houses became the cry, and in 1830 an Act was passed allowing any one who paid two guineas and executed a bond to retain beer and cider (not spirits); 30,000 beer-houses sprang into existence, and by 1869 there were 50,000. In 1825 fully licensed houses numbered 50,000, and in 1872 there were 70,000. In Birmingham in 1848 there was one public-house for every 166 inhabitants. After 1870 justices' control was resumed, but the pre-1869 houses were not allowed to be closed except for misconduct, and this lasted till 1903.

Up to 1830 the well-to-do lived in the centres of the towns, and the hutches for the workers were mostly run up on the outskirts; rich and poor alike suffered from the absence of sanitation, and their death-rate was probably about equal. After 1830 the rich began to move outwards to suburbs, and the poor settled in courts and alleys behind the business area. No attempt was made to control the method of building or the accommodation of these places; cottages built in back courts were common in the small towns of the earlier centuries, but it was during the 1830-70 period that the pernicious idea of back-to-back houses arose. Birmingham has to-day 40,000 of these death-traps, and the problem of destroying them becomes more expensive every year. It is estimated that a district of back-to-back houses has a death-rate 15 per cent. to 20 per cent. higher than that of similar congregations of poor workers where

there is space between the houses. Modern hygiene lays down twelve houses to the acre as a maximum for efficient health; the industrial towns have thousands of houses crowded forty to the acre. And it must be remembered that in 1851 half the population was living in urban districts, and by 1881 two-thirds. Back-to-back houses are no longer built; Birmingham forbade



The GIN-JUGGARNATH. Or, The Worship of the GREAT SPIRIT of the age.  
 His Omnipotence destroy themselves — His progress is marked with desolation, misery and crime.

George Cruikshank on the drink problem of the nineteenth century.  
 Cartoon issued 1834.

their construction in 1870, but the slum legacy is ours to deal with as best we may.

Since 1870 there has been an improving standard of hygiene, as shown by the figures for Birmingham. In 1912 the death-rate among the old houses was 26, in a newly built working-class district 13. Even now Birmingham comes seventh on the list of high death-rates of English towns, Liverpool and Manchester holding pre-eminence at the top. What can be done

by a city determined to clear its slums is shown in Leicester, whose death-rate is the lowest for English towns, and in its worst ward does not rise above 18. In Middlesbrough, on the other hand, a new town that rose after the miseries of the older cities should have been a warning, and where town-planning on lines learnt by experience was possible, so little care has been taken that not 10 per cent. of the houses are properly furnished with drainage.<sup>1</sup> The standard of housing for the workers is even yet none too high, but there is at least hope that the nation will refuse to create further slums where children are only born to die like flies or to grow up stunted, diseased, and morally debased.

The chief Acts for town improvement have been :

The Town Improvement Clauses Act, 1847.

Markets and Fairs Clauses Act.

Town Police Clauses Act, 1847.

Public Baths and Washhouses Act, 1846.

Public Health Act, 1848.

Nuisances Removal Acts, 1853, 1863, 1866.

Sanitary Acts, 1866, 1868, and 1870.

Then in 1872 and 1875 came the PUBLIC HEALTH ACTS covering the whole country, and a new chapter began.

**Summary.** 1. These forty years cover the period in which the changes known as the Industrial Revolution worked themselves out on the lines of *laissez-faire*, tempered by the protests of the humaner and more civilized parts of the nation. The first fifteen years were times of great hardship, followed by a burst of prosperity such as had previously been unknown. Production increased mightily, especially in the foundation industry of iron on which all the others depended. Progress both mechanical and chemical was rapid, leading to the discoveries which in the end were to replace the age of iron by that of steel.

2. The battle for factory legislation was fought out during this time. The first Act that was in the least effective had been passed at the end of our last period ; by 1874 there was on the

<sup>1</sup> All the above figures are for 1913.

Statute Book a considerable code of laws protecting women and children, and indirectly men, from long hours and exploitation. An attempt was even being made to extend the code to workshops and to the home worker if working for wages. Much remained to be done, but great progress had been made in the work of civilizing industrial life.

3. Modern Trade Unionism is the product of the fifties. After a time of terrible poverty and depression the workers settled down to the slow but sure process of building up powerful societies, combining mutual help in trouble and sickness with a defensive policy against attacks from employers. Their first care was to secure a legal position by obtaining legislation. This they triumphantly achieved in 1875. The chief forces were the 'new Unions', of which the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was the most prominent, led by an able group of workmen, known as the 'Junta'. They believed in political rather than industrial action, and somewhat neglected both the need and the latent power of the 'unskilled' workers.

4. The concentration of capital into large units began in certain industries about 1850, and increased during the next twenty-five years. Joint-stock enterprises were not numerous till after 1860, and the typical business of the period was a firm of one or more owners, the partnership being rarely shared by more than two or three. Capitalist and entrepreneur were one. Still it is possible to see over the whole period a steady increase in the size of businesses and an increasing proportion of fixed capital to total capital: Machinery, as it became more complex and expensive, tied up more money; swifter transit and communication made smaller stocks possible, and lessened, therefore, the necessary circulating capital.

5. Co-operative stores were a feature of the times; they rapidly increased after the success of the 'Rochdale Pioneers' in 1844, and helped considerably in establishing a more independent and self-reliant outlook among the workers.

6. 1830-70 was an evil time in the story of our towns. No regulation or control was attempted, and hovels were dumped wherever the builder chose, without water, drainage, or air.

Back-to-back houses in thousands appeared and are still with us; our slum problem is our heritage from these years. Attempts at improvement were so fought, in the name of *laissez-faire*, that legislation was always belated. It was not till after 1870 that the country was effectually roused to the needs of a social hygiene.

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### 3. Communications. World Trade

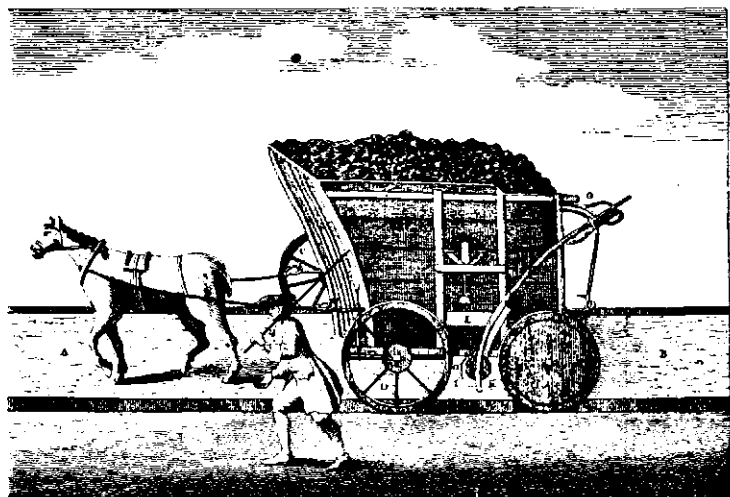
GREAT as had been the industrial expansion of the first third of the nineteenth century, it was fully equalled by the resulting commercial growth of the second. The need for markets for the new output was met and made possible by the most revolutionary invention of history. So great have been the effects of steam locomotion, that it is almost impossible for us to visualize the world as it was and had always been down to 1840. The discovery of the New World in the fifteenth century had lifted the horizon to an almost fabulous distance; the new motor force brought that horizon within a few weeks' visit. World exchange of goods and of intercourse became possible; the barriers that shut off race from race, that kept apart friends or foes, were threatened. The economic history of one nation begins to include the world.

**Railways.** If the period from 1800 to 1834 might be described as the Canal and Coaching Age, that we are immediately considering is without challenge the Railway Era. In 1834 railways were a little more advanced, perhaps, than air traffic in 1914, but their success was still a matter for speculation. By 1874 the great mass of the present lines were built; the division into the familiar dozen or so great companies was already accomplished; to all intents and purposes the railway system as we know it now was in being.

The origin of railways must take us back for a moment to the eighteenth century. Let us note first that the genesis of the system was not the locomotive but the track. It was the track



that at the moment made the locomotive possible, though, as Mr. H. G. Wells has pointed out,<sup>1</sup> it has been an influence retarding development ever since. At the end of the seventeenth century wooden railways existed in connexion with certain collieries, and about 1750 the wagons running on them were given cast-iron wheels. These early tracks worked by gravity



Illustrating the early use of rails for coal-wagons. About 1700.

on long slopes with primitive brakes, and accidents were frequent. Later the wooden rails were topped with iron plates, and complete cast-iron rails took the place of wooden ones about 1767; in 1776 they were made with an inner flange, and were called plate-ways (hence the name platelayer), tram-ways, or dram-ways. In 1788 the flanges were transferred to the wheels. The next name given was 'iron rail-ways', a name retained by the principal European languages, though we, as usual, have cut it short.

But it was not only in connexion with collieries that railways with horse wagons appeared; canals began to take powers to

<sup>1</sup> H. G. Wells, *Anticipations*, chap. I.

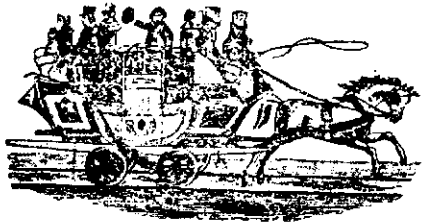
make railways at the ends of the canals to facilitate the arrival and dispatch of goods. In 1776 the Trent and Mersey Canal did so, and some of its tramways with flanged rails were still in use for wagons and carts in 1911. It was the fact that ordinary wagons could be drawn by horses along these rails that gave rise to the original idea in the first railways that, like the roads, they should be open to all who chose to use them. The early companies built the rails; they might or might not supply wagons and horse- or steam-power, but they expected to open the road to all who cared to pay toll. But when flanged wheels took the place of flanged rails, the ordinary cart or carriage could not travel on the lines, and it was soon found that it was impossible to run steam locomotives and horse traffic on the same track. Consequently the railway companies soon became their own carriers, but the early idea has left us a legacy in the thousands of private railway trucks that still block the sidings and impede the traffic with 'returned empties'.

The first public railway was built in 1801 from Wandsworth to Croydon, but only for horse-drawn vehicles. In 1821 a line of wooden rails for horse wagons was projected from Darlington to Stockton with the object of opening up the South Durham coal-field. It was George Stephenson who persuaded the promoters to have iron rails and a steam-engine. It was opened in 1825, and the locomotive, which weighed seven tons, had a perpendicular cylinder and only one flue to the boiler, and whose chimney soon got red hot with any speed, proved very expensive. Its average speed was four to six miles an hour, and its highest eight. Between the intervals of running goods by steam, the line was open to coaches paying tolls, and it was found these could be drawn by a single horse. The steam locomotive proved so expensive that the plan was nearly abandoned, when Hackworth designed the 'Royal George' locomotive, which proved cheaper than horses. In 1832 seven coaches belonging to various proprietors were running fifty journeys a week, and in 1833 the railway owners bought out the coaching interest and conveyed passengers themselves; in 1834 they drew passengers as well as goods by steam.

In 1826 the Liverpool and Manchester Railway got its Act of Parliament; in 1828 it decided on using steam-power, and in 1830 it opened with Stephenson's 'Rocket', with an average speed of fourteen miles per hour, and a maximum of twenty-nine. With this railway begins the story of their fight for existence, and one must fairly admit that the railways began it, though justifiably. There were two routes for goods between Liverpool

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1826.**

**RAPID, SAFE, AND CHEAP TRAVELLING**  
*By the Elegant NEW RAILWAY COACH.*



**THE UNION,**  
RAILWAY COMMENCE RUNNING on the STOCKTON and DARLINGTON RAILWAY, on MONDAY the 14th day of October, 1826.

And will call at York, and pass within a mile of Middleton, &c. on the way from Harton to Darlington, and vice versa.

**FARE.** From 12 to 14, per Mile. Fare is proportion.

No Graves expected by the Guard or Conductor.

**R. R.** The Proprietors will not be accountable for any Direct or Indirect loss or injury, unless covered and paid for accordingly.

The UNION will run from the Black Lion, Hovel and New Inn, Harton, to the New Inn, York, and to the Black Lion, York, near the Court House, Darlington; at each of which four passengers and parcels are booked, and the times of starting may be ascertained, as also at the Union Inn, Ears, and Yellow Inn, Darlington.

On the 15th and 18th of October, the Fair Days at York, the Lanes will leave Darlington at six in the evening for York, and will leave York for Darlington again at six in the evening; in the intermediate times, each day, it will ply constantly between Stockton and York, leaving each place every half hour.

A HORSE-DRAWN COACH ON RAILS running between Stockton and Darlington. Newspaper notice, Oct. 14, 1826.

and Manchester, besides the high road with its turnpikes, by river and by canal. There was a theory that canal and river were competitors, and that, according to the economics then fashionable, competition would keep down rates. But the directors of these two enterprises seem to have anticipated most of the methods of twentieth-century 'combines' or 'trusts', and by agreements to keep up rates exploited the public shamefully. Delays, favouritism, mounting charges for warehousing, exasperated the traders of the cotton towns, while the enormous profits of canals made the robbery manifest. It was these dis-

gruntled traders who set out to get the railway, though they had to bribe the canal interest with 1,000 shares to stop its opposition. It was not surprising that the canal shareholders were alarmed. Profits such as theirs human nature is loath to forgo. In 1824 the shares of the Birmingham Canal Company, costing £140 about the year 1770, were worth £2,840, and they were not alone. It is important to realize the opposition to the railways in England, because it is one of the main causes of that over-capitalization that makes the problem difficult to-day.

1. As we have seen, the first opposition was from the canals. This greatly increased the cost of securing the necessary Act of Parliament for starting a railway, even where it did not involve direct bribery. Often the canals had to be bought off, either by the present of shares in the new venture or by purchase outright.

2. The second vested interest that stood in the road was that of the turnpike trusts and their investors. They were not so wealthy nor so formidable, but they did what they could.

3. Then came the coaching interest, which, as we have seen,<sup>1</sup> was an extensive one. This could not be bought, since its stock-in-trade was no use to the railways.

4. Most formidable of all were the landowners, who were convinced, or professed to be, that both the produce and the amenities of their estates would be greatly deteriorated. Their genuineness is open to suspicion in some cases, because of their extortion. One landowner having secured £3,000 for a plot of land, demanded and got another £10,000 for 'consequential damages', which it is hard to believe he had real ground to fear. In the event his property was increased in value 20 per cent. by the line. Another, a great landowner of the eastern counties, extorted £120,000 for land worth £5,000, before he would drop his opposition to the Bill. There are many other stories of the kind. There were, however, honourable exceptions; the Duke of Bedford repaid £150,000 compensation when he found his property benefited instead of injured; Lord Taunton returned £15,000 out of

<sup>1</sup> See p. 398.

£35,000, because he had not suffered as much as he had expected.

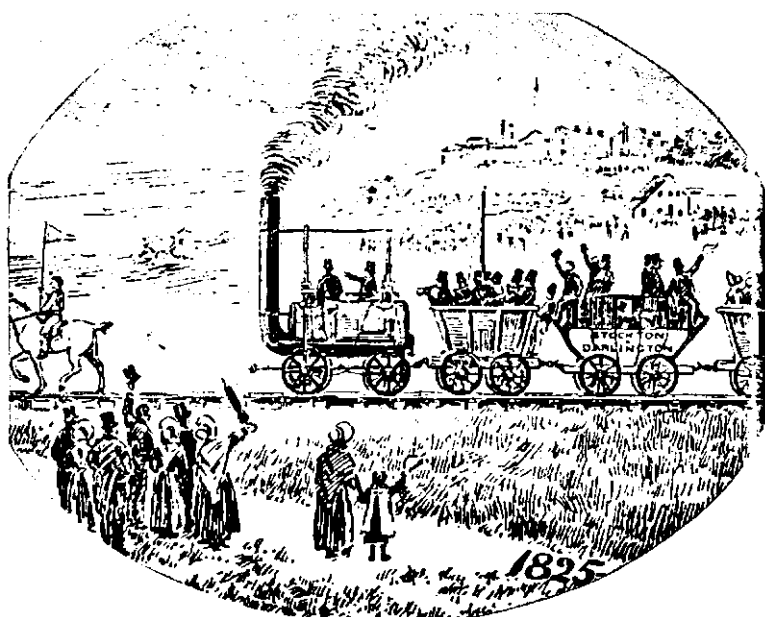
5. The towns, too, offered great opposition. This is more difficult to understand. Owners of beautiful country estates



*The Turnpike System at Manchester about 1850*

might perhaps genuinely fear that they would be injured, but why an industrial town like Northampton should object to the passage of a railway or the establishment of its locomotive works there, it is hard to see. The objection prevailed, and the line took a longer and more costly route with a tunnel, which

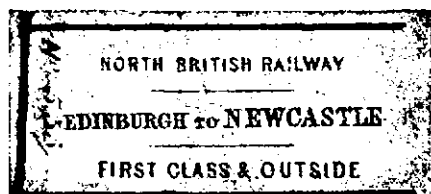
eventually cost £300,000. We are glad to-day that the railway were forced to skirt places like Oxford and Stratford, but it is strange to find so much opposition from districts already industrialized, and in an age that was blotting out miles of English landscape with the smoke of factories and the plague spots of the industrial dwellings of the thirties.



STEPHENSON'S FIRST TRAIN, Sept. 27, 1825.

6. The attitude of the press was, in general, hostile, though its arguments were as silly as ever they are nowadays. Here are some specimens: the *Quarterly Review* in 1825 condemned proposals for making railways general as 'visionary schemes unworthy of notice', and further, 'we should as soon expect the people of Woolwich to suffer themselves to be fired off from one of Congreve's ricochet-rockets as trust themselves to the mercy of such a machine going at such a rate (eighteen or

twenty miles per hour). We will back old Father Thames against the Woolwich Railway for any sum.' Again, in 1835 another, after doubting if women in particular would endure the fatigue, the misery and danger of being dragged through



AN EARLY RAILWAY TICKET

**COMPLETION OF A CONTINUOUS LINE OF RAILWAY COMMUNICATION**  
FROM  
**NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE TO LONDON,**  
JUNE 18. 1844.

---

**FREE TRAIN TO CELEBRATE THE ABOVE,**  
PROVIDED BY THE DIRECTORS OF THE  
**BRANDLING JUNCTION RAILWAY COMPANY.**

**DIRECTORS.**  
J. W. WILLIAMSON, Esq. Chairman  
T. E. MEADHAM, Esq. Deputy Chairman  
ROBERT WILLIAM BRANDLING, Esq. Managing Director  
EDWARD BRACKETT BRAUNTON | WILLIAM VICKERTAIN  
WILLIAM HOLAN | RALPH NATHAN  
GEORGE HERRARD | RALPH PATE PHILIPSON  
JOHN CARR | JAMES SILICK  
THOMAS GAY | RICHARD WOOD  
**ENGINEER.** | **SECRETARY.**  
RALPH COULTRARD | JAMES POTTS

TO LEAVE GAEWELLOATE STATION, GATEHEAD, AT 8 A.M., AND RETURN FROM  
DARLINGTON AT 5 P.M.

**ADMIT THE BEARER TO THE ABOVE.**

No. *James Potts Secretary*

TICKET celebrating the completion of the Newcastle to London Railway, 1844.

the air at the rate of 20 miles an hour, all their lives at the mercy of a tin pipe, or a copper boiler, or a pebble in the line of way', went on to draw a lurid picture of the disasters that would follow if they did succeed. They would 'destroy all the relations which exist between man and man, overthrow all

mercantile relations, overturn the metropolitan markets, drain the provinces of all their resources and create, at the peril of life, all sorts of confusion and distress'. Among the disasters foretold may be instanced springs drying up and meadows parched, cows giving no milk, horses dying out, houses crushed by the railway embankments; everybody except a few railway investors would be ruined, and last, final and most conclusive, the locomotives would not work because, even if the wheels turned, they were too heavy to move!

7. To all this cumulative opposition Parliament turned a deaf ear: for good and for evil it was committed to the doctrine of *laissez-faire*. One fear only it had, that the railways might become monopolies, and to this end encouraged scattered, small and rival enterprises, rather than a wide-viewed, comprehensive dealing with the whole change on a national basis.

All these seven factors went to swell the cost of making English railways. It must be remembered that other nations had the benefit of our experience; we were the first in the field, and paid for our inexperience. At the same time other nations were not so committed to doctrinaire shibboleths of *laissez-faire*. The result has been that English railways have cost nearly double those of any other country, except Belgium. The cost of the permissive Act seems to have been anything from £18,000 to £89,000; to get the Act for the Blackwall line of 5½ miles cost £75,673. This is less surprising when we read that counsel were paid by the day and made enormously long speeches, e. g. five hours on one out of thirteen subdivisions of one clause of a Bill containing 193. To the landowners went sums running into thousands per mile of route, the London and Birmingham costing £6,300 per mile, the London and Brighton £8,000.

But the worst characteristic of the railway venture was its piecemeal character. The fear of monopoly and the horror of its only real preventive, State purchase, caused Parliament to insist on small companies, and if possible rival ones. As early as 1820 Thomas Grey urged that the matter should be planned and controlled from a national standpoint, and a system linking the



big towns and radiating in six great trunk lines from London devised, but was laughed at as a visionary. So by 1844 the average length of the railways planned was fifteen miles. After that date came the railway mania, much of it purely speculative, but the chief companies had to buy out these projected lines in self-defence, and so had often to raise more capital than was justified by the probable traffic.



STEAM CARRIAGE designed to run between London and Birmingham, 1832.

The following figures indicate the boom :

In 1845 Parliament sanctioned 118 railways of 2,700 miles with capital of £56,000,000.

In 1846 Parliament sanctioned 270 railways of 4,538 miles with capital of £132,000,000.

In 1847 Parliament sanctioned 190 railways of 1,354 miles with capital of £39,500,000.

And of this total of 8,592 miles, 1,560 miles were abandoned by consent of Parliament in 1850.

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Nowhere, perhaps, has the doctrine of 'let-alone' been more disastrous than in our railways. Again and again the Government tried to induce the House of Commons to give it some control of this vast monopoly, but in vain. The railway interests were powerful, many members were shareholders, and much as they disliked monopoly, they disliked Government interference with commerce still more. In 1844 a Special Committee, with Gladstone as chairman, urged that the Board of Trade should be given power to revise rates and charges at intervals, and that Parliament should assert definite terms on which at the end of fifteen years the nation might purchase the railways. But the Bill to this effect was so modified in committee, that the resulting Act was useless.

In 1846 another attempt at control by a Board of Commissioners failed likewise from the indifference of Parliament. By 1853 the railways were countering the parliamentary policy of rival lines by amalgamation to such an extent, that a committee was appointed to investigate. They reported that amalgamation was increasing, that it had advantages of economy, though it did raise the problem of monopoly, but in any case Parliament was powerless to stop it. The Railway and Canal Act of 1854 followed, and laid down that lines must not obstruct each other or exercise preference in interchange of traffic, and so made it easier for one line to obtain running powers over another. From 1854 onwards amalgamations continued, and by 1874 the condition was not greatly different from that we knew in 1914. The Great Western Railway with its 2,993 miles was made up of 115 smaller lines.

Two things, however, Parliament did do for our railway development: it forced the companies to cater for the third-class passenger, and to pursue a policy of safety first. In early days the third-class passenger was not recognized as a paying proposition, and when the companies condescended to carry him at all they certainly did not make travelling pleasant for him, not only herding him in open wagons without seats, but contriving as far as possible by running few trains with third-class coaches to

force him to choose between a higher class or a night on the platform. As early as 1844 Parliament interposed and decreed that every line carrying passengers must run one train daily which would stop at every station if required and carry third-class passengers at *1d.* a mile. This was the 'Parliamentary Train' of the Mikado's song, and it 'allowed Lazarus as well as Dives to travel on a Sunday'.<sup>1</sup> The pioneer character of the English railways and the determination of Parliament to make these terrific engines of desperate speed as safe as could be managed caused our tracks to be built with a solidity and our trains to be run with a care that other nations have failed to emulate. It too, added to the original cost; but in this case we hardly regard it as a fault.

It is interesting to note another way in which the railways forced the devotees of 'let-alone' to consider, if only for a moment, the possibilities latent in their policy. The condition of the 200,000 navvies engaged in railway construction challenged public attention, and in 1846 a committee, appointed to inquire into it, reported. The state of affairs shown up was very bad: preventable accidents were common, truck general and perhaps unavoidable, the housing abominable. So impressed were the inquirers that they flung non-interference to the winds and boldly recommended that the railway companies should have to pay compensation for accidents, wages should be paid weekly, and a Special Board should veto any new railway that did not provide proper accommodation for its navvies. Needless to say the committee was before its age, and Parliament did nothing; but its report was the harbinger of all that interference with the 'rights' of the individual to exploit his neighbour, which has become the commonplace of later times. It was in connexion with railways that Gladstone in 1844 first ventured to talk of nationalization; it was in connexion with their construction that the helplessness of the adult male worker, as distinguished from women and children, was first officially admitted.

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Railway Clearing House, started in 1842 to organize through traffic of trucks over various lines and to adjust amounts to be paid to each line for its use. It led to a common classification and rating of goods and to general common action.

Meanwhile what happened to the canals? To a large extent relatively they fell into disuse. There were several causes for this.

1. The railways were forced by the opposition of the canal companies to buy some of them out, at any rate sufficiently to block any possible through traffic. Eventually they owned more than a third of the total mileage. Once in their possession the canals were, if not neglected, at least not pushed. This was to be expected, for canals only charged for use of way, the barges took the carrying charges, and the wharf owners those for wharfage. The railways both carried and warehoused.

2. The canals had been so prosperous that they had not bestirred themselves to organize national as distinct from local traffic. To go from Birmingham to Hull meant using ten separate canals and ten bookings. Even if they had tried it would not have been easy to create a national system. In many places the locks were small and would only take 20-ton barges, and the cost of enlarging would be serious. Again, if the tolls had been equalized it did not follow that the haulage charges would be. Once railways were established, no private capital could have been found for the necessary reconstruction. France did it with great advantage to her citizens; but it was done by the State, not by private enterprise, and no English statesman of the nineteenth century would have dared to suggest such State action here.

3. Much of the trade that on the Continent is carried over canals with us is done by coastwise shipping. The steamships were as great a factor in the disuse of the canals as was the steam locomotive.

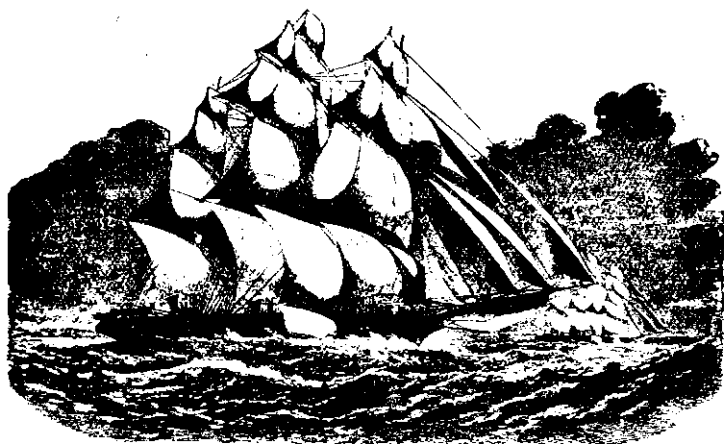
4. Canal carriage is slow, must be done in bulk, and involves much supplementary traffic at terminals. The railways carry small parcels as well as tons of coal and ore, deliver speedily



and even to the door of great works and the holds of ships. England rapidly organized her commerce on the basis of speed, small stocks, and through bookings. The canals could not keep up with it. In all departments England was changing in the direction where speed was essential. The coal merchant could work with smaller capital if he could get supplies speedily and without much storing; all kinds of traders welcomed the warehouses the railways provided for housing goods for short periods at a charge. Barges take a lot of filling; the railways took all consignments, little or big; no need to charter a truck.

**Shipping.** Between the years 1830 and 1850 America seriously challenged our supremacy in merchant shipping. Steam was still in the experimental stage for cargo vessels, and not till after 1840 was its success certain even for passengers and mails. Meanwhile the Americans devised a vessel to rival the British sailing-ship, which was still built of hard wood, broad beamed, and safe rather than swift. These new American 'clipper' ships were built of soft wood and therefore cheaper, though not so strong, and were five or six times as long as their beam. Their speed left the British ship far behind. But after 1850 British owners began to turn out clipper ships, though, as safety and endurance still attracted them, they continued to use hard wood. This made them dearer, but on the other hand enabled them to carry their cargo on long voyages undamaged, and soon the gain of America was challenged. The Civil War put an end to the rivalry for four years, and after 1866 American shipyards did not renew it. That nation turned its attention to internal reconstruction and expansion westward. England continued to build clippers up to 1874, chiefly for the China tea trade, there being a theory that steam would damage the tea. In 1863 the steamer *Robert Lowe* safely delivered an undamaged cargo of tea, and after 1874 the clippers were transferred to the Australian trade, where they continued to 'race the southern wool' till the end of the nineteenth century. But during twenty years of our period the hundred days' race from China with the new seasons tea had been a sporting event.

Meanwhile steam was gradually showing what it could do. Neglecting the *Savannah*,<sup>1</sup> the first real steam crossing of the Atlantic was accomplished in 1838 by four ships—the *Sirius*, the *Great Western*, the *Liverpool*, and the *Royal William*; the shortest time was fifteen days. In 1839 the Cunard Line was founded with four steamers of about 1,150 tons, wooden ships, paddle-wheeled, about 200 feet long, and 425 h.p. They had a speed



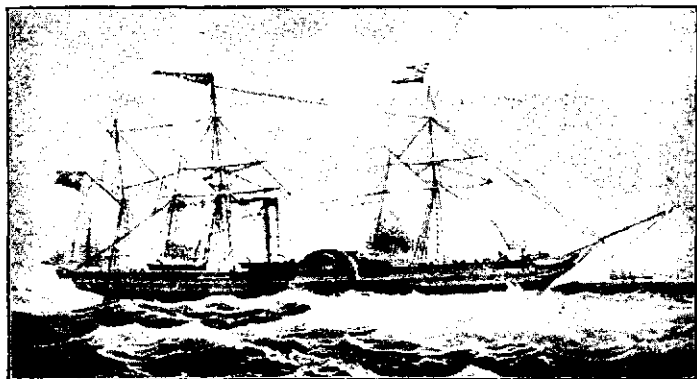
TWO FAMOUS TEA CLIPPERS, the *Ariel* and the *Taeping*.  
*Illustrated London News*, 1866.

of almost eight knots, and used some 450 tons of coal between Liverpool and Boston. They also carried sails.

All these early steamships were of wood. Construction of wooden walls on iron frames was the first step towards iron ships. It was found that only teak had sufficient oil in it to prevent deterioration of both the iron and the wood on contact. In 1843 the problem of iron ships was solved by Brunel, who built the *Great Britain* of Bristol. It was a wonderful achievement, for every detail had to be thought out from the beginning; e. g. there were no machines, as now, for punching the rivet

<sup>1</sup> See p. 404.

holes, and every one of the thousands of holes had to be drilled by hand. She was not only an iron ship, but she was fitted with the new screw propeller. It is doubtful if the huge *Great Eastern*, of which more later, asked as much constructive genius of her designer as did this first iron ship of large size. Brunel, who was not only a designer of ships but also the builder of the Great Western Railway, is another of the inventors whom we owe to alien immigration, for his father was a Frenchman



AN EARLY CUNARDER, with paddle-wheels and sails.

settled in this country. The *Great Britain* cost £120,000, but she was a commercial success, and lasted sixty years.

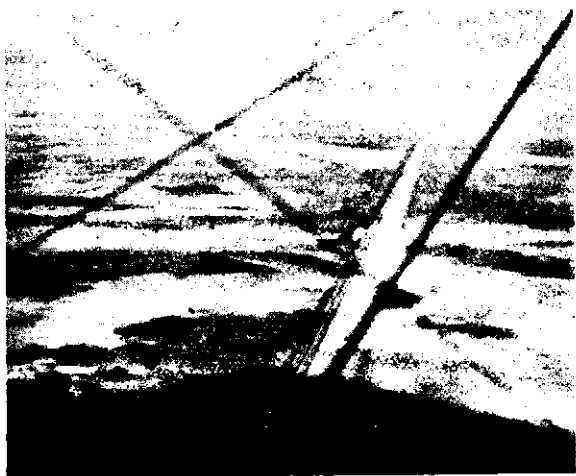
The advantages of the iron ship are: (1) it is lighter for the same dimensions; (2) it offers more cargo space; (3) it is stronger; (4) it can be built much bigger; (5) wooden ships cannot stand the vibration of a screw. The great disadvantage of the sailing-ship was the uncertainty and irregularity of its timing. In spite of all this it held its own against steam and iron as a cargo boat for nearly fifty years after steam and iron were usual for passengers and mails. In 1854 the navy had only sixteen steam battleships and eighteen steam frigates. Among the many mistakes of the Mutiny time in 1857 the Government decided to send out troops by sail. They arrived after steamers that started a month later.

The two difficulties facing the early steamships were the great expenditure of fuel and the consequent need for coaling stations. An effort was made to meet these in 1858 by the construction, again by Brunel, of the *Great Eastern*. This ship was to be large enough to carry all its coal for the Australian voyage, and to have both large cargo and passenger space. Unfortunately, it was too far ahead of its time. So far the largest iron ship had been of 3,300 tons and 375 feet in length. The *Great Eastern* was of nearly 19,000 tons, her length 680 feet, beam 82½ feet, coal capacity 10,000 tons, and cargo 6,000 tons. She was to carry 4,000 passengers. She was not outstripped in size till the *Mauretania* was launched in 1907, and she was too big to pay in 1858. On no route was there cargo enough for any one voyage to fill her, nor were 4,000 passengers a voyage likely to appear. Even then she need not have been the disastrous failure she was but for gross business mismanagement. From 1863 to 1874 she did excellent work as a cable-layer. In 1890 she was broken up.

At the very time that the *Great Eastern* was building, the question of fuel economy was being solved, and not on lines of size. The invention of the COMPOUND ENGINE reduced the coal consumption by one-half, and made all sorts of developments possible. There was little new departure till 1870, but much progress on lines already established. In 1870 the White Star Line was founded, and began the custom of catering for the comfort of passengers, which has so enormously developed on the Atlantic route, till it has reached the present point of vulgar ostentation and waste of human effort, demanded apparently by a small group of self-made millionnaires and their hangers on. The early steps on the path of comfort were, of course, a desirable advance.

The period 1855-70 was the great time of the development of English shipping relative to that of other countries, but her lead was not to go unchallenged. The first step in the opposition was the building of the SUEZ CANAL by Ferdinand de Lesseps with French and Egyptian capital. The project was strongly

opposed by Palmerston and by English public opinion; vested interests were touched, for much English shipping would be useless if the road to the East became one closed to sailing 'clippers'. After seven years Lesseps got his concession from the Khedive in 1856, though the English influence managed to block the Sultan of Turkey's confirmation for another ten. Meanwhile, in 1859, Lesseps got started, and after ten years of colossal work the Canal was opened in 1869. It shortened the



The straight line of the Suez Canal seen from an aeroplane.

Photograph by Mr. Alan Cobham.

distance between London and Bombay by 4,500 miles out of 10,719. The story of how the Canal became British and what we are doing in Egypt comes after 1874. It was a French engineer and French money that made the thing possible.

**Docks.** The London Docks were enlarged to meet all this new development. In 1835 the VICTORIA DOCK was constructed, and in 1875 the ALBERT. Between these dates there was much amalgamation and increase of docks on the south side of the river, culminating in the opening of the Canada Dock in 1876.

In 1864 the Millwall Dock in the Isle of Dogs was made. In Liverpool between 1834 and 1874 the docks were increased by 200 acres, i. e. they were nearly trebled.

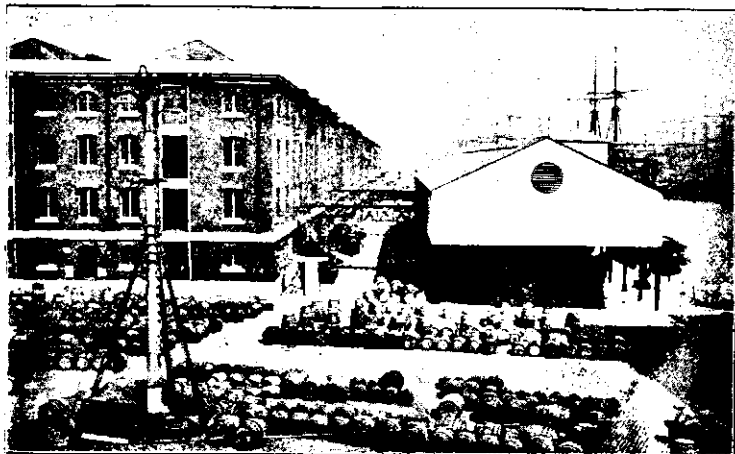
Lastly, a few significant dates may be given.

- 1837. Invention of the electric telegraph.
- 1839. Penny post.
- 1851. First submarine telegraph.
- 1855. The Meteorological Office was established.
- 1857. An international code of signals at sea arranged.
- 1862. International rule of the road at sea established.
- 1863. Twin-screws first used.
- 1866. The Atlantic Cable laid.
- 1870. Telegraphic service transferred to Government.
- 1874. The International Postal Convention.

**The general movement of trade.** From 1834 the most striking feature of our commerce and industry is that wave movement of prosperity and depression that is now the commonplace of the competitive system. So far no one has discovered, within the bounds of the present organization, a means of preventing an alternation of over-production and under-consumption, in what seems to be a fairly well defined cycle. As we have seen, the crisis of speculation in 1825-6 was followed by stagnation for eight years; then came a movement forward, and the year 1834 opening with better prospects, developed a still greater craze for speculation. Suddenly every one with a little money saved rushed to invest it in ventures mad or otherwise. Joint-stock banks, as yet of unlimited liability, were the favourite speculation, followed by insurance companies and mines. A London steam-coach company, a substitute for indigo company, a floating club house, all found ready subscribers. Between 1834 and 1836 over 300 companies were formed with capital totalling 135 millions. English finance was soon in a dangerous condition, and in 1837 came a crash in America due to a faulty banking system; the precipitate action of the Bank of England in refusing American bills spread the effect to England. English



THE LONDON DOCKS. St. Katherine's, 1827-8.



THE LONDON DOCKS TO-DAY



THE  
LANCASHIRE  
**Emigrant's**  
**Farewell.**



Farewell parents, we must leave you  
And cross the briny ocean wide,  
At home midst hunger and starvation,  
No longer here we can abide.  
Dear parents it is hard to leave you,  
Depression drives us far away,  
Wipe your grief-worn cheek dear mother,  
Leave of weeping, now we pray.

May God now comfort you at home,  
Pray for us while on the deep.  
Adieu, adieu, to you dear father,  
Dry up your tears and do not weep.  
Oh, oh, how hard it is to part,  
From our friends we love so dear  
Poverty swells within our dwellings,  
What has thou come to Lancashire.

Farewell brother, farewell sister,  
We leave you on your native shore.  
Farewell father, farewell mother,  
Perhaps we ne'er shall see you more;  
One kiss from you friends and relations,  
We have not long with you to stay,  
Our vessel spreads her swelling sails,  
To bear us to a foreign land.

See the vessel weighs her anchor,  
We from old England now must part,  
To see our friends and parents crying,  
It would rend the stoutest heart.  
But when the vessel was in motion,  
Loud shouts from shore did say farewell,  
To see our weeping friends and parents,  
Would make your bosom heave and  
swell.

UNEMPLOYMENT in Lan-  
cashire and emigration. A  
popular broadside

manufacturers had slipped into the way of allowing American merchants to trade on credit; the refusal of the latter's bills left the manufacturers with no capital to go on with. In 1837 there were 50,000 unemployed in Manchester alone, and it was some years before trade recovered.

All through the forties prices declined, and in the period 1840-5 trade and industry were suffering and the condition of the people desperate.

The railway boom of 1845 onwards heralded the recovery, though there was a financial crisis in 1847,<sup>1</sup> and in England largely neutralized the effect of the potato failure. Thousands of unemployed found work among the navvies, an enormous impetus was given to the iron trade, and the new industry of machinery and machine tools doubled and trebled. Prices rose, but production and wages rose too, and by 1850 the country's prosperity seemed to contemporaries astounding. To them the wonders of the 1851 Exhibition in its miracle house of glass appeared to herald a golden age of wealth and happiness. Products and manufactures from Great Britain and her colonies, from all the principal states of Europe, were

<sup>1</sup>See p. 560.



exhibited side by side. Prussia sent chemical dyes, France her unmatched silks and velvets and the new product of beet sugar. Krupps won a medal for a new and superior cast steel, while Britain displayed to the admiring eyes of her citizens her



THE RAILWAY JUGGERNAUT OF 1845  
Cartoon from *Punch*.<sup>1</sup>

woollen and cotton fabrics, her machinery, railway lines and rolling stock, unrivalled as yet from any quarter of the globe. Even the manual worker shared the hopes of the nation, for this period, as we have seen,<sup>2</sup> was also one of Trade Union expansion and steady advance in the standard of life. Even advancing prices, the effect of the new gold discoveries, though they diminished real wages, stimulated production, and the war years of 1854-5 meant more spending and more call for products.

In 1857 came the reaction, precipitated by another banking

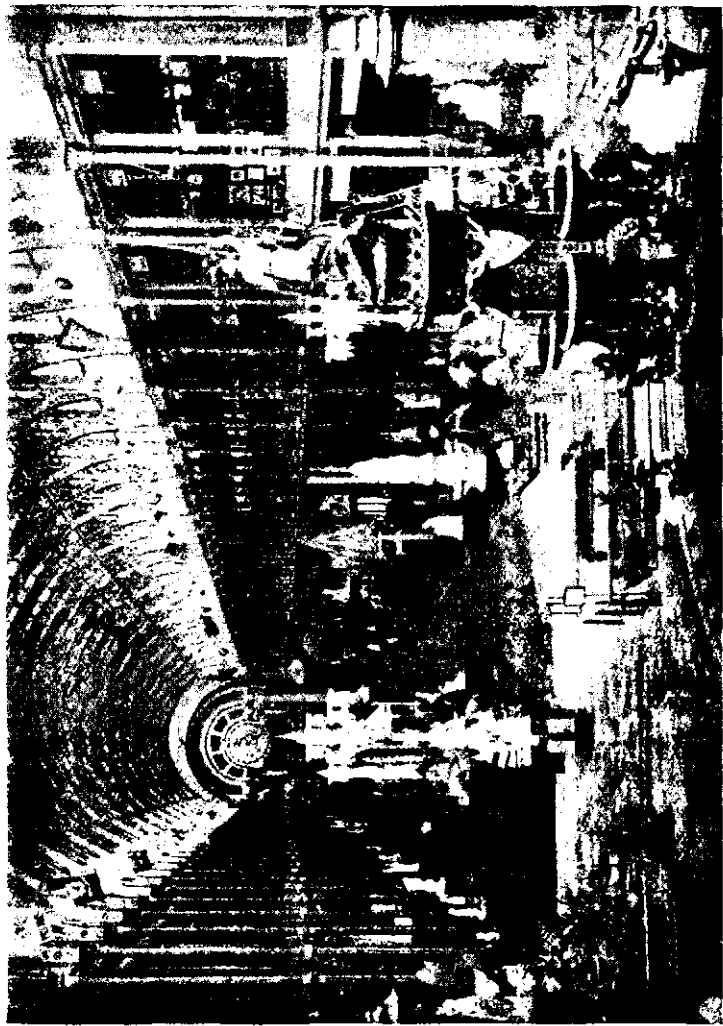
<sup>1</sup> Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of *Punch*.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 508.

crisis in America, and many English banks suspended payment. Prices dropped 20 per cent. to 30 per cent. The Bank Charter Act was suspended and the Bank allowed to increase its issue of notes, and gradually stability returned.

The American Civil War, 1861-5, produced a disastrous effect in Lancashire, since 85 per cent. of our raw cotton came from America. The Northern Government proclaimed a blockade of the southern ports, and by 1862 the price of raw cotton had quadrupled, all mills were working only part time, and 50,000 men and women were totally unemployed. By Christmas 1862 half a million were receiving regular relief. This crisis was, of course, due to a special cause and was local only, but in 1866 came the recurring money crisis, when the great firm of Overend and Gurney failed. There was a great trade revival in 1870-4. This began early in 1870, and the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War stimulated it. Mülhausen, Calais, and Lyons closed down for trade purposes, and practically continental rivalry of English products was in abeyance. The trade prosperity led to an increase of spare capital and consequent speculation. There was a boom in joint-stock shares in mines, railways, and tramways, partly due to the drop in the price of steel rails following on the lapse of the Bessemer patents. The payment of the French indemnity to Germany of £200,000,000 disturbed the money market in 1872 to some extent, and prices rose. Thanks to Trade Union activity, wages followed them, and the prosperity of 1870-4 was shared by all classes, except the agricultural, whose depression was already beginning.

**The Growth of Joint-Stock Business.** In 1834 joint-stock business still laboured under many difficulties. In the first place the absence of limited liability made prudent folk chary of investing small sums and thereby risking their whole fortune, while on the other hand the unlimited liability of the shareholders gave a credit to the company that was often fictitious, for the assumption that the shareholders had large resources available at need was not always true. Secondly, only by obtaining letters patent from the Crown could the company act



THE GREAT EXHIBITION OF 1851. An early example of photography

as a corporate body and sue or be sued. But limited liability did not yet commend itself to the times, and a committee in 1837 reported against it. In 1844, however, an inquiry showed that the law in the matter covered a great deal of fraud. Bogus companies were common; unsound ones, trading on mythical capital, still more so. The resultant Act of 1844 empowered a register of companies to be made, and gave to all registered companies the power to sue and be sued. This at least helped by encouraging publicity. But in 1855 an Act was passed limiting the liability of members of certain joint-stock companies, and succeeding Acts extended the rule. In 1862 an Act allowed seven or more persons to constitute themselves a company with either limited or unlimited liability. In 1867 limited liability companies might have directors with unlimited liability.

**Foreign Trade.** The greatly increased production of these years, together with the shortening of distances due to steam traffic, brought about inevitably a search for new markets and for opportunities for investment. It is during this time that the Far East enters fully into the world trade. Trade with China is as old nearly as history, and we have seen how the porcelain of Cathay reached the palaces of Western Europe by way of Russia and the Baltic. The East India Company had for long a monopoly of the China trade by sea, and tea had during the eighteenth century become an important import. The trade was restricted on both sides, for until 1834 the East India Company held a monopoly in Britain, and in China it was confined to a limited body of Chinese merchants responsible to their Government for its proper conduct. The smuggling trade in opium was extensive, as during the eighteenth century it was heavily taxed. In 1796 the Chinese Government forbade its import altogether, owing to the widespread resultant demoralization among the Chinese. The smuggling continued, and when, in the exercise of their rights, the Chinese attacked English ships and burnt imported opium, we forced a war on them, and by the Treaty of Nankin in 1842 obliged them to open certain ports to British trade, including opium, while Hong-Kong was

ceded to Britain. Peel defended the treaty on the ground that India could not afford to sacrifice a revenue of £1,200,000. So greatly did 'business' principles dominate Parliament that Lord Ashley had to withdraw his motion opposing it. In 1847-8 another 'little war' was necessary to force the Chinese to fulfil the treaty. But the trade resulting was not so great as had been expected, and in 1857 Great Britain forced open further doors in China at the mouth of her guns, and extorted permission for British subjects to travel all over the interior. This war was strongly opposed by Gladstone and others, but the country was in no mood to consider ethics, and the Government was supported at the general election. The material advantages gained were large. In 1840 our exports to China were only half a million, in 1858 they were £1,700,000, and in 1878 £3,700,000. The smirch on our fame was perhaps equally great.

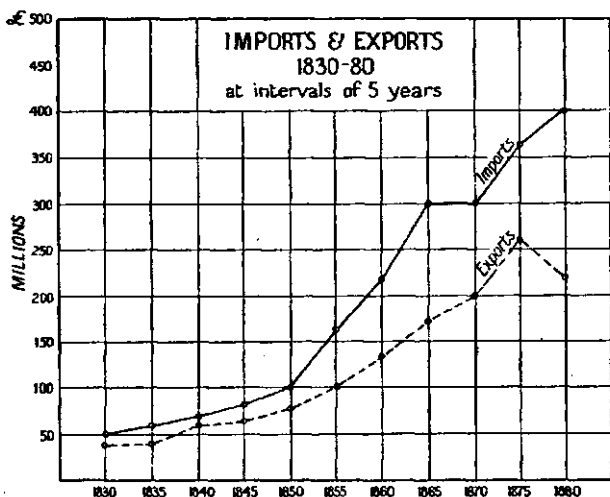
But China was not the only country that tried in vain to bar its doors to a commercialism that knew no scruple. In 1854 the United States had triumphantly forced the Japanese to open a port to their traders, and the English admiral promptly followed suit. In 1858 a treaty was signed between Japan and England. It is possible that America may by now have regretted her action, and that Japan is still uncertain whether it has gained or lost more by contact with Western civilization. Certainly its first experience was unfortunate. It happened that Japan had more gold than silver, and consequently valued its silver coins highest. Trading on the ignorance of the world market of the Japanese merchants, English and American traders rapidly exchanged their silver coins for gold, to the loss of the Japanese. It is said that even English clerks in the service of mercantile houses in China slipped across and converted their monthly salaries paid in silver to gold of the same weight. Sharp practice such as this was not exactly a good omen for the future.

In 1855 a treaty of commerce with Siam was also concluded, and markets in the Niger area were opened up in the early sixties. In 1861 Great Britain acquired Lagos on the west

coast of Africa, and a trade in palm oil replaced the old one in slaves.

Throughout the period much English capital was invested abroad; this was particularly the case with railways. In 1842 an English contractor and English navvies built the railway from Paris to Rouen, and English capital set going many lines in newer lands.

The dependence on one country for the bulk of our cotton



supplies was shown by the American War to be very dangerous, and caused us to look round for fresh sources of supply. There were possibilities in Queensland if English capital could be found; Egypt, which produced a fine cotton of long staple, greatly increased its area of production; Brazil raised its share of the supply from 1 to 10 per cent., and India was encouraged to both a greater and a better crop. English capital was in demand for all.

The graph above shows the great rise in our foreign trade after 1850, and the increasing excess of imports over exports, accounted for on p. 397. The effect of the American War,

1861-5, is clearly shown, especially in the cessation of the rise in imports. In figures the change may be summarized by saying that between 1834 and 1846 our imports increased at an average rate of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. per annum, from 1846 to 1872 at an average rate of  $6\frac{1}{10}$  per cent. per annum. Some of this remarkable increase was due to the REPEAL OF THE NAVIGATION ACTS. In 1845 they were consolidated; in 1849 all foreign trade was thrown open to the vessels of all the world, and in 1853 the coastal traffic as well.

**General Effect of Railways and Steamships.** One of the important effects of the new means of communication was an alteration in the proportion between fixed and floating capital. It was no longer necessary for a manufacturer or a merchant to keep large stocks of raw material or of goods for sale. He could now trust to getting them to his need quickly, consequently he had a smaller proportion of his capital in this part of his business and so a relatively increased amount for the fixed capital of buildings and machinery. At the same time the invention of new and even more complex machinery tended in the same direction. This increase in fixed capital made it more difficult for a poor man to start and helped the growing division between capital and labour. Obviously also, the power to get quickly from place to place, and to communicate in a few hours over thousands of miles by telegraph, made possible those amalgamations and big businesses that were already becoming numerous.

**Banking and Finance.** The uncertainties of financial operations in times of rapid changes are shown by the successive crises that occurred between 1833 and 1870. In the 1836 drop in trade<sup>1</sup> the Bank of England saved the situation, and by 1838 things seemed normal. But a bad harvest came, and some ten millions of gold were exported to pay for corn, and soon after the Bank of France had to appeal to the Bank of England for a loan to prevent a run caused by panic due to the Bank of Belgium stopping payment. All this caused great depletion of reserves, but not foreseeing a storm the rate of discount was reduced, and a million of gold exported to America.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 550.

The drain of gold continued, and when the Bank tried to realize some of its securities it was unable to do so. Eventually the Bank of France came to the rescue and the danger was averted. During the crisis sixty-three country banks suspended payment.

These constant panics convinced the Government that something must be done, if possible, to steady things. Hence the BANK ACT OF 1844. Its chief provisions were:

1. The Bank of England was divided into two separate departments for issue and for banking. The issue department was allowed to issue notes to the value of £14,000,000 in securities, plus the value of the gold, silver, and bullion it held, handed over from the banking department beyond what it needed for current business.
2. As existing banks of issue ceased, the Bank of England was to inherit their power of issue up to two-thirds of the value.
3. All stamp duty on Bank of England notes was abolished, but the annual sum paid to the Government increased.
4. The Bank was required to give notes for standard gold at a fixed price on request.
5. Weekly accounts on a specified form to be issued.

As to country banks the Act ordered:

- (a) That no new bank of issue was to be created, thus giving the Bank of England a prospective monopoly.
- (b) The amount of issue of existing banks not to be increased.
- (c) Country bank issues were not to be legal tender.

The next financial crisis came in 1847, again due to the depletion of the gold reserves. Famine had caused export of gold to buy corn, and the railway speculation reached its height in 1847, when £132,000,000 were invested in railways. The Bank did not raise its rate soon enough, and when its reserves got nearly exhausted, panic ensued, and people, fearing no more notes would be issued, began to hoard them and to make runs on the country banks. The Government promised to suspend the Act of 1844, and the mere knowledge that notes would be issued calmed the public and the crisis passed.



The 1857 panic, already referred to,<sup>1</sup> was mainly brought about in America. The gold discoveries had led to unbounded speculation. The increase of gold was prodigious; from 1493 to 1850 the average annual gold output was reckoned to be £1,800,000. From 1851 to 1860 it was £26,600,000. Prices



THE RUSH FOR THE GOLD REGIONS

rose somewhat, but most of the extra wealth went in speculative enterprises, especially in America in railways. The crash began with the failure of an Ohio insurance company for seven million dollars. There followed in the United States 5,123 failures. Panic in England succeeded, the Bank Act was again suspended, and this time an actual over-issue of two millions in notes was necessary, the only time up to 1914 when this has been the case.

It will be noticed that each crisis was due to over-confidence in the investing public and consequent speculation. The next was

<sup>1</sup> See p. 553.

in 1866, and was aggravated by a new system of financing ventures that had grown up. 'Suppose that a railway contractor wanted £50,000; he applied to a company, offering as security shares in the line he was constructing. The company agreed to lend him the amount, not in cash, but by acceptance made out in his favour; this acceptance the contractor could then discount, and thus obtain the money required. In this way profit was made by the loan of a signature only. The transaction was not analogous to the discount of a bill of exchange, for there were no goods delivered and sold, and requiring only an interval before being consumed; hence the distaste which bankers felt to accepting and circulating such paper.'<sup>1</sup> This had certain advantages of speed and ease, but was capable of much dishonesty and recklessness. The money market had been uncertain for some time. In 1861 America adopted an inconvertible paper currency which brought the gold to Europe and stimulated speculation. The cotton crisis had been serious and had forced fresh imports from Egypt, China, and Brazil,<sup>2</sup> and gold had to be sent until an increased export trade could grow up with these countries. All this disturbance helped speculation, and there was an enormous increase of limited liability companies, which had been fully established legally since 1862; 90 per cent. of those founded between 1862 and 1865 failed. When, in 1866, the great firm of Overend, Gurney & Co. was known to have been unsound since 1860 and now stopped payment, with liabilities of £18,700,000, panic ensued. In one day the Bank of England advanced £4,000,000; the total losses of the crisis were said to be £50,000,000. The Bank Act was suspended once more, and things calmed down.

These financial crises were all brought about by over-trading in one form or another, and the hopes that the Bank Act of 1844 would succeed in preventing them were not realized. The Bank, however, was able, and increasingly so as its directors gained more experience, to prevent the disasters taking the

<sup>1</sup> Andréades, *History of the Bank of England*, p. 355.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 558.

worst form. It was as the central reservoir of the banking of the whole country that the Bank of England became more and more important. The question of note issue in relation to currency waned in significance, for by 1874 the bulk of the business of the country was carried on by means of cheques and bills. Even in 1864, 96.8 per cent. of the payments in London were made in this way. This had been brought about by the somewhat selfish policy of the great Bank in maintaining its monopoly, and at the same time refusing to found branches in the provinces. Hence grew up the great joint-stock bank, which, deprived of the right to issue notes, built up a banking system on cheques, which became the common currency of the country. This was the general state of finance by 1874.

**Summary.** 1. The chief revolution of the time was in transit. In 1834 men moved at most at some ten miles an hour, and communicated over intervals of days or months. By 1874 a speed of forty miles an hour was common, and the telegraph had linked the ends of the earth by a bridge passable in an hour or so. In 1834 Englishmen wandered the seas at the mercy of wind and tide; in 1874, 'sure as the ferried barge they plied, 'twixt port and port'. India was nearer than Italy had been. The result was a complete reorganization of our trading system; capital turned over and earned its profits many times to the former once, all the earth was opening up as a source of raw material, all the nations became our markets. England, first in the field, set the pace, and it was one that almost staggered its makers. By 1874 the path was marked out, the speed was increasing, perhaps to a foreseeing eye the crash of forty years later was already inevitable.

2. The main feature of the change in commercial organization was the growth of the limited liability company. In the early days of the century the typical business was that of the one-man owner and director, the man who found the capital and who ran the trade was one. By 1874 this capitalist entrepreneur had been largely replaced by the joint-stock enterprise, where many men found the capital and shared the profits, while the

management fell to paid officials, who might or might not contribute to the capital, or share its gains. The war between the small business and the large had already begun.

3. Commerce became the gospel and the test of success in this first half of the Victorian Age, and we had no scruple in forcing it on reluctant peoples. So convinced were we that commercial prosperity and civilization were synonyms, that we believed we did well even if we forced trade at the gun's mouth. The Far East was successfully 'opened up', and British capital was poured out in a golden stream on less favoured lands. Railways, cotton factories, and the stokeholds of steamships were surely blessings that none should refuse, however great the price in morals or in beauty.

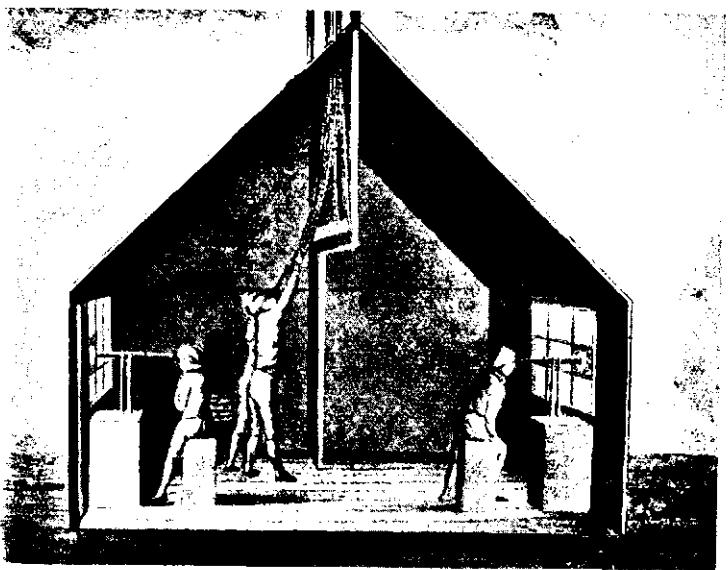
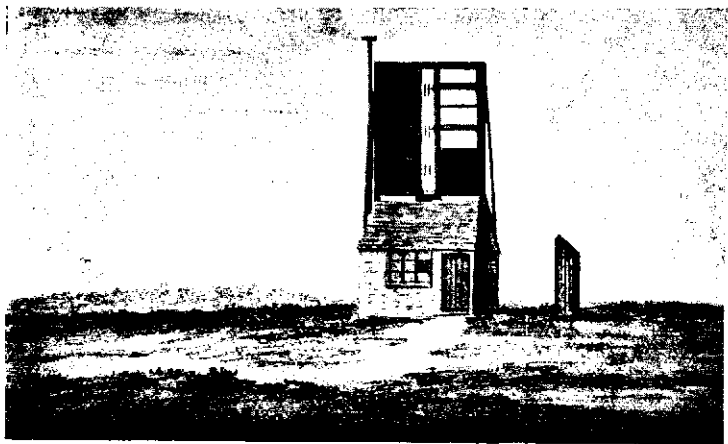
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#### 4. The Chartists. Economic Theory. Government Measures.

It is now necessary to turn our attention to several matters that, of sufficient importance to demand fairly full treatment, do not come easily into the main stories of either agriculture, industry, or commerce, and yet concern them all. The first of these is an attempt at social revolution disguised as political reform.

**The Chartist Movement.** It is not quite possible to treat the story of Chartism along with the other economic theories of the time, because it combined action with theory, and, though it failed for the moment, did actually do something, not merely provide a reason for doing. The movement sprang from three tributary streams arising in the South, the Midlands, and the North, and these streams differed considerably in character.

The actual 'charter' was drawn up by the leaders of the LONDON WORKING-MEN'S ASSOCIATION, a society founded in 1836 by a group of intellectual working-men, of whom the chief was William Lovett (1800-77). The result of the Reform Act of 1832 had been a great disillusionment to the manual workers.



THE TELEGRAPH. Before the introduction of the electric telegraph, a semaphore system had been employed. Exterior and Interior of the Telegraph House at New Cross, 1796. The next station on Shooter's Hill can be seen in the distance

They had taken their full share in the agitation for it, and its immediate results seemed to be the New Poor Law<sup>1</sup> and the trial of the Dorchester labourers.<sup>2</sup> The artisans were consequently filled with suspicion of bourgeois politics. The association discouraged middle-class members, laid great stress on education, and aimed at quality rather than quantity in its membership. Lovett was a Cornishman who had educated himself in the teeth of the greatest obstacles. Henry Hetherington (1792-1849), a compositor, and James Watson (1799-1874), a Yorkshireman and the son of working parents, were of the same kind. They were in fact a group of skilled artisans, who one hundred years later would have been caught young and turned into members of the intellectual professions by a system of scholarships. In 1838 Lovett drew up their programme, which became the Charter. On the face of it the Charter was purely political. The demands were: (1) universal male suffrage, (2) annual parliaments, (3) secret ballot, (4) equal electoral districts, (5) payment of members, (6) abolition of the property qualification for members. To us, who know the futility of even the most democratic machinery unsupported by social status or economic freedom, the faith of the men of the forties that such changes would produce a millennium is pathetic. We must remember that they had no experience to go on, and the Act of 1832 certainly seemed likely to put the middle classes in the saddle; why should not an extension of the franchise to all act in the same way for the poor? And they were right so far, that some such changes were an essential preliminary step to any effective assertion of the needs of the proletariat; but that they would be only the first steps of a long and toilsome uphill journey was, perhaps mercifully, hidden from them.

Meanwhile the advanced guard of the classes, to whom the 1832 Act had given the tools, were thinking it was time to use them, especially in view of the obvious misery and stagnation around them. In 1837 the BIRMINGHAM POLITICAL UNION, which had done so much in the reform agitation, was revived.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 578.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 384.

at the instigation of Thomas Attwood (1783-1856), a fanatic on the currency question, with the object of agitating against the gold standard. To attract working-class support they added universal suffrage to their programme, and called a great meeting at Newhall Hill, Birmingham, in August 1838. It was said that 200,000 assembled, and delegates were appointed to summon a convention and take measures for a national petition. This meeting, which was attended by representatives of the London Working-Men's Association and by leaders of the workers from the North, is regarded as the initial step in the movement.

The northern leaders, mentioned above, represent the third stream that went to form the river. The North was seething with agitation due to the misery we have depicted in Part VI, the most miserable and the most reckless being the hand-loom weavers, still struggling in hopeless rivalry with the power-factories. Their despair and their indignation alike centred round the New Poor Law, and so violent an agitation had been conducted for some time by Oastler and J. R. Stephens, that in whole areas it was impossible to put the law in force. To Oastler and Stephens came Fergus O'Connor (1794-1855), an Irishman of good birth with strong revolutionary traditions, who had been in the House (1833-4) as an Irish member. The London artisans would have none of him; they saw the superficiality of his thought, and distrusted his blustering volubility and reckless temperament. The more ignorant and more oppressed workers of the North, those of 'the unshorn chins, blistered hands, and fustian jackets' to whom O'Connor turned, welcomed him gladly, and he became the hero of the northern associations, and in 1838 their acknowledged leader. In 1837 he founded the *Northern Star*, a paper which reached at one time an issue of 45,000 and a circulation of at least ten times as many readers. For fifteen years this paper dominated the movement.

One other leader must be named, 'the schoolmaster of Chartism', James Bronterre O'Brien (1805-64), who by his various journals inspired the more thinking members of the movement,

Such was the triple origin of the Chartist movement, but the

Birmingham Political Union was soon swallowed up and its middle-class leaders dropped out. Neither London artisan nor sweated domestic worker of the North had any faith left for them.

In 1838 mass meetings all over the country elected a convention to meet in London to organize the agitation. It met in February 1839, sat for several months, removed to Birmingham and again to London, and effected nothing. It was, from the first, paralysed by dissensions, not as to aims but as to means. O'Connor and the northern leaders talked physical force, however much or little they meant of it. The Londoners, Lovett, Hetherington, Watson, and the rest, believed it neither necessary nor useful. Meanwhile, 1,200,000 signatures were obtained for a national petition, and Attwood and Fielden undertook to present it. But while the convention talked and quarrelled, the country was in ferment; there was panic in all the haunts of middle-class respectability, for outside London there was practically no police force (Bradford with 60,000 inhabitants had six constables). Fortunately Lord John Russell, at the Home Office, kept his head; still more fortunately he selected for the military command in the emergency Sir Charles Napier, who with his second, Colonel Wemyss, sympathized with the distress that was behind the agitation, and refused to be rushed by panic-stricken magistrates into repressive measures. Meetings were allowed as long as they were peaceable, and instead of making clear his power by shooting into harmless crowds, he demonstrated to the leaders both the forces he had at his disposal and what modern artillery in the hands of a few men could do. Only in Birmingham was there a riot, due to police interference and William Lovett was arrested for 'seditious libel' for signing a document stating the fact.

In July 1839 the petition was discussed in the House; its supporters, Attwood and Fielden, were not very effective: Disraeli used the opportunity to attack the Manchester School and attribute the existing misery to the displacement of a benevolent aristocracy by men with power and no recognized duties.



O'Connell opposed the petition, and it was refused by 235 to 46.

There followed an attempt to call a general strike, and a rising in Newport which failed; arrests of Chartist leaders to the number of over 400 followed. Sentences ranging from three months to transportation for life indicated the fears of property holders.

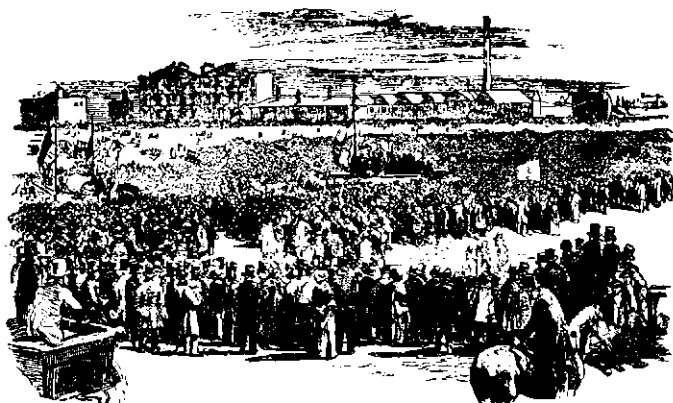
The collapse was pitiful but inevitable; the leaders were hopelessly divided as to methods; the rank and file trusted like sheep to the local men they knew, and wild, dispersed, and isolated efforts were bound to fail. The lack of organization was not altogether the fault of the leaders, for the Correspondence Acts were still in force, and all central control thereby illegal. Greater men might have failed under such conditions.

From 1840 to 1842 some sort of reorganization took place. The National Charter Association was established, an attempt at 'Christian Chartism' was made, and Lovett devised a wide scheme of education. Many of the mere talkers had been weeded out by the drastic action of the Government, and the physical force section was in abeyance. That the organization was improved was shown by the 2,000,000 signatures to the petition to save Frost, who led the Newport insurrection—more than the national petition itself had received. But on his release from prison, O'Connor rapidly made himself dictator of the movement and eliminated the better influence of O'Brien and Lovett. In 1842 another great petition signed by over 3,000,000 people was presented to the House. It was introduced by Duncombe and nominally supported by Roebuck, who, however, killed it by referring to O'Connor as a 'malignant and cowardly demagogue'. No support of the principles involved could counteract the admission implied, that the people who wanted votes could choose such a leader. Macaulay flung the power of his rhetoric against the threat to men of property involved in universal suffrage, and Lord John Russell and Peel followed on the beauties of our institutions and the greatness of our liberty and happiness. There were forty-nine supporters of the petition; Chartism had received its death-blow.

It struggled on, however, for another ten years or so. O'Connor initiated a preposterous land scheme which was only not fraudulent because O'Connor was as incapable of arithmetic as his deluded weavers, and in 1847 he was returned to Parliament. About the same time the leaders were in touch for the first time with continental revolutionaries. O'Connor had met Marx and Engels in Brussels in 1845; Mazzini was in England, and when in 1848 the news of falling dynasties throughout Europe reached England, the old flame flickered up in one last flare. Another petition, to be supported by mass meetings in London and elsewhere, was arranged; the Government, scared not so much by Chartism, as by the continental crash, organized an overwhelming display of strength; the middle classes enlisted in large numbers as special constables, and the big meeting on Kennington Common petered out. The petition, claimed to contain 2,000,000 signatures, was taken to the House, and on examination found to contain many false or mythical signatures. The roars of laughter that greeted the discovery may perhaps be forgiven as the hysteria of men suddenly relieved from panic.

Did Chartism fail, and if so, why? The answer is that its failure at the time in its ostensible objects was complete. The reasons are not far to seek. The division of its leaders on the question of methods was paralysing, and when the physical force party got control they either funked the last step or were so incompetent as to believe a universal rising could organize itself. No plans seem to have been made; to declare a general strike and take no measures to feed the people, to call on unarmed civilians to face trained soldiers in the open, to leave everything to chance, seem the proceedings of madmen. One cannot but suspect that O'Connor and his followers counted on threats to work the miracle, and their bluff being called showed an empty hand. Of his genuine sympathy with the outcast and the oppressed there is no doubt, of his power to inspire and lead still less, but he had neither knowledge of economics nor strategic gifts, and any cause he dominated was bound to fail.

But there is a sense in which Chartism did not fail. Its political



THE GREAT CHARTIST GATHERING TO PRESENT THE  
MONSTER PETITION



POLICE AWAITING THE PROCESSION IN HYDE PARK

dress was only its outside, the heart of the movement was social and economic. On that side the progress of the next fifty years was largely the work of men inspired both by the ideals and by the failure of the Chartists. The ideal claims of the under-dog, voiced by men like O'Brien and Lovett, have lived to the present day; the failure taught men to hasten slowly and to dig deep the foundation before building.

There can be little doubt that the whole Chartist agitation helped to bring about, too, those numerous inquiries into the condition of the workers undertaken by Parliament in the forties, inquiries that made possible the series of Factory Acts and the establishment of legal Trade Unions that have so profoundly bettered the condition of the manual worker.

Lastly, all the six points have by now been won, except annual parliaments, which it is seen would have more disadvantages than advantages. But a shortened period is already in existence, and it may be shorter yet.

**Economic Theory from 1834 to 1874.** We have called this a period of *laissez-faire* triumphant, and with justice, for it was the time when both in theory and practice the classical school of economics attained its maximum achievement. Of this school the one predominant figure is John Stuart Mill, and his life and work are of absorbing interest. Educated, along with his sisters, on a fantastic system by his father, James Mill, friend and devoted disciple of Bentham, at the age of 13 John Mill was holding his own in the society of Ricardo, Malthus, and Place, and at 23 was publishing essays on political economy. Nurtured on the pure milk of utilitarian doctrine, Mill, up to 1850, was the great exponent of orthodox economics. Of striking personality, master of a style that makes his book on logic easier to read than some novels, a man of moral pre-eminence even among the best of the Victorian age, his influence was enormous. Up to 1850 he summed up in himself and his books the best features of the time. Let us see what were the fundamental laws seemingly so successfully established.

I. *The law of self-interest.* All men desire well-being for them-

selves and their dependents, and so all seek wealth. Such seeking by all must in the end procure the welfare of all, even when interests apparently, though not really, clash.

2. *The law of competition.* In most cases it is therefore best to leave men free to compete with each other; competition if free enough will automatically bring justice. This was the liberal individualistic creed, which held that State interference was nearly always harmful. 'Every restriction of competition is an evil, every extension of it an ultimate good.'<sup>1</sup> The evils of the present system are due to too little, not too much competition.

3. *The law of population.* There can be no hope for the proletariat until they learn to restrict their numbers. So hopeless was the outlook on this side that Mill, the apostle of liberty, was even prepared to prohibit the marriage of those who have no prospect of supporting a family.

4. *The law of supply and demand.* This law was given a much more precise and accurate form by Mill, thus: Prices tend to oscillate about a definite point of equilibrium, the point at which supply and demand are equal. They rise and fall according as demand rises above and falls below supply.

5. *The law of wages.* This is best expressed by Cobden, who said 'that wages rose whenever two masters ran after the same man and fell whenever two men ran after the same master'. This 'iron law of wages' by which the worker is at the mercy of a fatalistic law of supply and demand, a law that no one can alter or ameliorate, was perhaps the crux on which the coming revolt turned. A theory which doomed the workers of the world to a mere fodder basis, with their only possible hope in a general refusal of their class to perpetuate slaves, was bound to be challenged by all who had any faith in a final destiny of good for mankind.

6. *The law of rent.* Ricardo's theory of rent was extended to cover other things than land, being by Mill defined as the share taken by any one who, by luck or skill, contrived to produce

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, Book IV, chap. 7, par. 7.

the same article at a less cost of capital and labour than his competitor.

7. *The law of international exchange.* That both parties gained by such exchange, just as they did by individual exchange, and the freer it was from control or interference the better.

These 'fundamental laws' were so firmly established in the minds of most of the people of the time and believed to be so incapable of challenge, that not only did Miss Martineau expound them for the young in the guise of tales, but *First Lessons in Political Economy for the use of Elementary Schools* was a serious publication of the time. Yet, even at the moment of its apparent triumphal completion, the whole edifice was being undermined, and by the hand of the man who had achieved its final synthesis. For Mill was full of a generous sympathy, especially for the oppressed of the earth, and by instinct could not help welcoming anything that might brighten the gloomy outlook offered to the bulk of humanity by the classical economists. Consequently we find in each successive edition of his book and in his later writings a modification and even a repudiation of much that he had at first believed. First of all he moved away from the position that economic 'laws' are immutable and as incapable of alteration by man as are the laws of physics. Especially in the distribution of products could man interfere. In 1866 he definitely abandoned the wages-fund theory, and eventually came to an attitude of mixed Socialism and individualism. His desire for individual liberty prevented his ever adopting a really socialistic programme, but he certainly cleared the way for others to do so. He advocated the abolition of wages and the establishment of co-operative production, a land-tax in order to socialize rent, and restriction of inherited wealth. That he proposed these measures in the name rather of individual liberty than of general social welfare does not diminish the debt which modern Socialism owes him. The breach in the wall of the Manchester School was large and permanent.

. **The Opposition.** Moreover, in spite of the *débâcle* of Chartism and the general abandonment of Utopian dreams, there remained

several movements having a strong leaning towards social reform and an outspoken challenge to classical economics. Of these there were three starting from the Conservative group, and deriving from Coleridge, as well as a smaller group of Liberals who gradually departed from the pure doctrine of Benthamism.

The leaders of the Oxford movement, especially J. H. Newman, were definitely opposed to the current Liberal political economy, for they held that the pursuit of gain was the root of all evil, and not the moral source of improvement, virtue, and happiness. They held that if the 'economic man' existed, 'that being whom we were brought up to regard as causing the world to go round by making a bee-line to the best pay available',<sup>1</sup> he was a most undesirable product and incompatible with the high calling of a human soul, and the existence of the Kingdom of God on earth. The Young England Movement, of whom the most notable figures were Lord John Manners and Benjamin Disraeli, like the Oxford School, looked back longingly to a feudal age of a kind that existed only in their imaginations, when

Each knew his place—king, peasant, peer or priest,  
The greatest owned connexion with the least ;  
From rank to rank the generous feeling ran,  
And linked society as man to man.

All would be well if power and responsibility were remarried in the one person, for, given a responsible and benevolent aristocracy, they could cry,

Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning die,  
But leave us still our old nobility.<sup>2</sup>

Conservatives, too, were the Christian Socialists who centred round Frederick Denison Maurice. 'Christian Socialism is the assertion of God's order,' said Maurice. A Christian communism was the ideal, but Maurice was no democrat, and believed kingship to be of divine origin. More inconsistent still, but powerful by means of a brilliant and popular pen, was Charles

<sup>1</sup> C. E. Montague, *Disenchantment*, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Lord John Manners, *England's Trust*.

Kingsley, poet, revolutionary, and conservative, so revolutionary that his *Yeast* and *Alton Locke* still ring a clarion call against vested interests, so little democratic that he was unable to address a Socialist lordling and omit his title, even in intimate letters. Kingsley, in fact, believed that the real battle of his time was the Church, the gentleman, and the workman against the shopkeeper and the Manchester School. This group, which contained also Tom Hughes, T. M. Ludlow, Vansittart Neale, and other men of intellect and power, had at least the merit, unlike the Oxford and Young England Schools, of looking forward and not backward. The group started several journals, but these failed; the beaten Chartist workmen of 1848 had no ears for parsons and gentlemen, however well-meaning. The movement turned off towards co-operation, sanitary reform, and the Working-Men's College. The last, with such teachers as Ruskin, Tyndall, Rossetti, Madox Brown, and J. R. Seeley, did not lack influence on the more intellectual of the working-men.

On the Liberal side there were men who, with J. S. Mill, were feeling their way slowly to a Socialist standpoint, but on the whole it is true to say that, while the disappointment of Chartism turned the working-class away from politics towards Trade Unionism and Co-operation, the middle-class reformer and some of the workers, convinced that slow reform must precede any possible triumph of labour, 'went into Gladstone's camp and refused to leave it either for the social Toryism of Benjamin Disraeli or for the social revolution of Karl Marx'.<sup>1</sup>

Although the life and work of Karl Marx falls within our period, it was not till after 1874 that his influence became increasingly important. All that concerns us here is his connexion with the foundation of the FIRST INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WORKING-MEN, founded in 1864. On September 28, 1864, a meeting of working-men of different nations was convened by George Odger and Randall Cremer, in London, and Professor E. S. Beesley took the chair. The

<sup>1</sup> Beer, *History of British Socialism*, vol. ii, p. 191.





WORK, by Ford Madox Brown (1821-93), painted when he had come under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites. By permission of the Manchester Corporation.

principles and rules were formulated by Marx, the former in an *Address to Working Men*. In this he showed that 'the intoxicating augmentation of wealth and power is entirely confined to the propertied classes', he reviewed the history of the past thirty years, and ended with the trumpet call, 'Workmen of all countries, unite!' He 'advised the workmen to organize independent labour parties, to demand in Parliament social reform and factory legislation, to oppose all bellicose diplomacy, but to carry on a relentless class war, until they had conquered political power and nationalized the means of production'.<sup>1</sup> The I.W.M.A. held congresses in various European cities yearly till 1869, and then at The Hague in 1872, when it practically dissolved. The failure came from internal dissension; Marx and his followers believed in parliamentary social reform as the first objective, and this was especially so with the British section after the extension of the franchise in 1867, but on the Continent there was a strong contingent of Proudhonists, Owenites, and Anarchists, who had no faith in it, and desired to work entirely for social revolution. Marx's own ideas of the economic basis of history and the class war handicapped him in the argument, and the breach became too great. From 1872 until comparatively recent times, revolutionary Socialism had small hold on the British workman.

**The Poor Law.** In 1832 one of the first acts of the reformed Parliament was to appoint a Commission of Inquiry into the working of the Poor Law. They immediately found themselves faced with a chaos of administrative muddle and legislative confusion. We have seen that under the stress of the changes wrought by enclosures and the new machinery the Poor Law of Elizabeth and its later amendments had completely broken down. By 1832 the bulk of the labouring population in rural areas was in receipt of relief as a supplement to wages, and the state of the towns was not much better. The Commission appointed assistants, who went all over the country collecting evidence, and this evidence was sifted and arranged by two men, Nassau

<sup>1</sup> Beer, *History of British Socialism*, vol. ii, p. 217.

Senior and Edwin Chadwick, to whose influence the reform that followed was mainly due. Nassau Senior had early convinced himself that there was no necessity for poor relief at all; that once the poor realized that they must work or starve, they would work; that, if they knew that old age could hope for nothing but what it had saved for itself, thrift would become almost universal. Later he modified these views in face of practical necessities, but held them still as an ideal. Edwin Chadwick (1801-90) came early under the influence of Bentham, and had acquired an almost fanatic belief in the power of scientific administration to cure all the ills of man. Above all he believed in the centralization of power in the hands of expert officials. It was under the inspiration of these two men, an inspiration that sprang directly from Bentham, that the report was written. The main points in it were:

1. Outdoor relief to the able-bodied was entirely evil.
2. Indoor relief was being atrociously mismanaged and the rates wasted on utterly depraved characters.
3. To help the aged or the orphan was to encourage neglect of family ties.
4. The general mixed workhouses, where they existed, were thoroughly bad, and that, in order to classify and segregate the classes, the unit of administration should be much larger than the parish.

The fundamental error made by the Commissioners was due to their concentration on what was undoubtedly the most conspicuous evil, the subsidizing of the rural labourer under the Speenhamland system. To meet this they recommended the plan of refusing outdoor relief to the able-bodied, and offering only relief in a workhouse. For this purpose alone it was a good plan, but the Commission seems to have ignored the question of the aged, the infirm, and the children, assuming the continuance of out-relief when possible in these cases, though they did definitely object to the general mixed workhouse, and contemplated the formation of units so large as to make possible

separate buildings and management for the various classes of inmates. They proposed to remove the habitual vagrant from the province of the magistrates and the constables, where the legislation of Elizabeth had left him, and transfer him to the control of the same authority as all other victims of destitution. It was an unfortunate proposal, and, to make matters worse, the problem of the vagrant in search of work and of the respectable unemployed, the displaced hand-loom weaver and the factory worker in times of bad trade, was not faced or apparently even considered.

The report was followed by the POOR LAW AMENDMENT ACT of 1834, an Act still in force and but slightly modified, ninety years later. Its chief clauses were as follows:

(a) The central control of poor relief was to be placed with three Commissioners appointed by the Crown, who were to have power to appoint a secretary and assistant commissioners. The latter were really inspectors. The three should control the whole administration and issue rules, orders, and regulations. General rules were to be laid before Parliament, and might be disallowed by Order in Council.

(b) Commissioners to have power to combine parishes in unions, and Boards of Guardians to be elected for the union by the parishes.

(c) Commissioners to have power to order the building of a workhouse with the consent of the majority of the guardians or of the ratepayers.

(d) Commissioners to make rules for the government of workhouses and to direct appointments and dismissals of officials.

(e) Commissioners to have power to prohibit out-relief to the able-bodied.

(f) Settlement by hiring and service abolished and removal made more difficult.

The Commissioners were appointed in the first place for five years, then yearly till 1842, and then for five years till 1847. In that year they were replaced by a Poor Law Board periodically renewed till 1867, when it was made permanent. The President

and Parliamentary Secretary of the Board held seats in the House, and thus the apparent irresponsibility of the Commissioners was avoided. In 1871 the Poor Law Board became the Local Government Board.

Driven by their secretary, the efficient if ruthless Edwin Chadwick, the triumvirate got speedily to work. The task they faced was colossal. There

were 20,000 parishes in England, most of them objecting seriously to being merged in any union. There were vested interests of all kinds anxious to keep the *status quo*. Farmers who wanted cheap labour, landlords who wanted rents secured through the rates, shopkeepers afraid of losing custom, every labouring man in the country who saw his claim to 'work or maintenance' challenged, all together with many voices denounced the Act and the 'Three Kings of Somerset House'. But the reports of the assistant-commissioners offered ample justification for high-handed orders from the central authority. Corruption and abuse were everywhere; at

Compton the bill for a pauper's marriage amounting to £6 16s. 2½d. was paid by the poor-rate; there was wholesale falsification of accounts; at Bulcamp three generations of paupers, all born in the workhouse and having had permanent home there for years, were happily living on the rates; on the other side the neglected condition of the infirm, the imbecile, and the lunatic was often indescribable. At the same time, here and there



A LUNATIC. Early in the nineteenth century.

were instances that seemed to show that the assumption of firmness would result in getting rid of the pauper without undue suffering; e. g. at Atcham an assistant overseer had prevented the adoption of the allowance system by refusing to supplement wages, but offering to pay the paupers to play marbles. The farmers gave way and paid full wages.

Let us look for a moment at the two main principles on which the reformers proceeded. These were (1) that the condition of the pauper should be generally 'less eligible' than that of the lowest class of unaided workers, (2) that relief should only be given to the entirely destitute—it must be 'all or nothing'. At the very outset the carrying out of the first principle offered a difficulty. How, in view of the condition of the poorest industrial worker at the time, could the condition of the workhouse inmate be made worse? It must have puzzled the most thorough-going Benthamite to feed, clothe, and house the pauper on a lower standard than the workers of Colne<sup>1</sup> and yet keep him alive. Less food and clothing being impossible—indeed more proved to be absolutely necessary—the Commissioners decided that the only thing to do was to make the workhouse 'less eligible' by making it more unpleasant. A régime of harshness and discipline not greatly differing from that of a prison was therefore introduced, and earned for the workhouse the name of the 'Poor Man's Bastille'. In the words of the Commissioners themselves, 'The only expedient, therefore, which humanity permits is to subject the pauper to such a system of labour, discipline, and restraint as shall be sufficient to outweigh, in his estimation, the advantages which he derives from the bodily comforts which he enjoys'.

The second point of policy was justified on the ground that only so could you avoid helping those who did not need it. It was argued that Friendly Societies had found it necessary to draw a rigid line and refuse to recognize any illness but complete illness, so the Poor Law could not recognize poverty, only destitution. Unlike the Elizabethan organizers of poor relief,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 488.

who held that in poverty as in disease prevention is better than cure, the theorists of the nineteenth century were concerned



'OLIVER ASKING FOR MORE'

Charles Dickens's exposure of poor-law administration in *Oliver Twist* illustrated by George Cruikshank.

only to diminish official pauperism; that was their pigeon-hole, what happened to the pauper before and after his period of destitution was no concern of theirs.

Now these two theories, applied to the able-bodied labourer, more or less willing to work, did secure the end aimed at. For the most part he preferred to work, and the farmer at any rate had to raise his wages to a point at which the attractions of semi-starvation on wages were greater than fuller meals in the 'Bastille'. Even then it is doubtful if the depauperization of the rural areas would have attained the success so proudly claimed by the supporters of the Act, but for the new openings for work offered by the railways and the mines. So much for the able-bodied; what of the others, the aged, the infirm, the children, the lunatic, and the imbecile? For the most part they continued to receive out-relief, inadequate and unsupervised; where it was absolutely necessary they were received into the workhouse. It was at this point that the policy of the Poor Law Commissioners departed disastrously from that of the Commission of Inquiry. The latter had definitely ruled out the general mixed workhouse. They saw clearly that to mix together a crowd of people of all ages, sexes, and conditions merely because they could all be labelled destitute, was thoroughly evil. But in their anxiety to get workhouses built at all, the Poor Law Commissioners allowed guardians at first to do the cheapest thing, and build a general mixed workhouse. They soon discovered their mistake, too late; all their later efforts failed to induce the guardians to go to the expense of schools, infirmaries, and asylums, with workhouses standing half empty. It was of course impossible to treat all the classes properly, to invent a régime or collect a staff that should combine a deterrent discipline for the workshy, a school for the child, a nursery for the infant, an almshouse for the aged man and woman, not to mention nursing and medical attendance for the infectious, the lunatic, and the mother with a new-born baby. The result was pitiful for the sick and aged, a national disaster in the case of the child. In 1838 there were 42,767 children under 16 living in workhouses. Even when they did build schools, Poor Law Guardians proved quite incompetent to manage them, or to induce teachers to teach in them. In 1849 an outbreak of cholera



in a Poor Law school at Tooting carried off 180 out of 1,400 children.

Such was the great Act of 1834, about which philosophic Radicals and scientific administrators were prone to wax lyrical even down to the year 1900; let us see how far it achieved any of the aims of its promoters. In the rural areas, where alone it succeeded in being carried out, it was apparently successful in getting rid of able-bodied pauperism, and the Benthamites cried triumphantly, 'There, we always said there can be no such thing as surplus labour, and now we've proved it'. Modern investigators do not feel so sure of the proof, since other and abnormal factors were at work to provide a living for displaced agriculturists, and what they are sure of is the misery inflicted on thousands of helpless human beings, men, women, and little children, in the name of economic law. None, who know the minds of the poorest in the countryside, doubt that behind their hatred and terror of the 'house' lies a deadly experience and tradition of harshness and callous indifference. In the towns the opposition was keener and more successful. Any general order prohibiting outdoor relief to the able-bodied proved impracticable, owing to the intermittent employment due to fluctuating trade. So a labour test was substituted by which applicants for outdoor relief were forced to perform a task of labour, nearly useless in kind even when heavy in quantity. Since economic theory did not allow the labour of paupers to compete in the market with the produce of private enterprise, the work could not be productive, and was almost confined to oakum-picking and stone-breaking. Often it was a farce, but where really imposed it was a cruelty to the underfed textile worker and factory hand. In 1843 nearly 40,000 able-bodied men were employed in these 'labour yards'.

But the law which was cruel to the respectable poor, proved merciful to the habitual vagrant. He found the Poor Law Authority a milder master than the magistrate and the constable, and he cheerfully learnt to confine his applications to unions with a reputation for generosity. For the aim of the

original Commissioners to secure national uniformity failed utterly.

But even this modified deterrent practice met with the most strenuous opposition in the towns. There was serious rioting in Bradford and elsewhere, and it was many years before the industrial areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire fell into line. Fielden, the humanitarian manufacturer of Todmorden, succeeded for a time in preventing guardians being appointed or a rate collected in his union, and no workhouse was built there for thirty years. Oastler and J. R. Stephens used their fieriest eloquence to rouse the workers to resistance. At no time was the measure popular, but no one put forward an alternative scheme, except mad idealists and Socialists who refused to accept the economic theories of the age, and the new law was at least cheaper and less demoralizing than the practice that preceded. So the Commissioners became permanent, though they changed their name, the workhouse a recognized institution, and poverty, no matter how caused, a disgrace. But the efficiency dear to the soul of Edwin Chadwick was not obtained, and in 1865 Dickens could write as his solemn opinion, 'I believe there has been in England, since the days of the Stuarts, no law so infamously administered, no law so often openly violated, no law habitually so ill-supervised'.<sup>1</sup>

Some few additions were made to the law. In 1865 the union and not the parish was made the unit for chargeability, and in 1867 the care of the sick and insane in London was taken from the guardians and vested in a new board, the Metropolitan Asylums Board. At the same time the establishment of dispensaries and the combination of several unions into districts for the purpose of forming schools were authorized. In 1869 the Metropolitan Poor Law Authority was authorized to provide training ships.

**Taxation.** In Part VI we left the nation bearing perhaps its heaviest weight of taxation before 1914. From 1820 onwards there had been some remission, and under Huskisson's influence

<sup>1</sup> Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, postscript.

# The Corn Laws.

By ALLEN DAVENPORT.

Author of all the Songs and Poems under the signature  
of Alpha.

Air.—"Auld Lang Syne."

Ye millions that so keenly feel  
The pressure of the times,  
To you I earnestly appeal,  
Then listen to my rhymes,  
In vain you labour night and day,  
The owners of the soil,  
By Corn Laws takes the bread away,  
That should reward your toil.

CHORUS.

Then open every British port,  
And let the poor be fed,  
No longer see your children starve,  
And die through want of bread.

The haughty possess the land,  
And wield oppression's rod,  
In spite of that divine command,  
Found in the word of God ;  
The Corn Laws petrify their hearts,  
And make the nation groan,  
For when the people cry for bread,  
They only get a stone.  
Then open every, &c.

Down, down, with the starvation laws  
And no more be beguiled,  
Cheap bread must surely be the cause  
Of woman, man, and child ;  
All property is insecure,  
And insecure must be,  
Till they our plundered rights restore  
And make the Corn Trade free.  
Then open every, &c.

The Corn Laws are the greatest scourge  
That has been since the flood,  
Enacted since the time of George,  
Whose reign was that of blood !  
But we have now a Queen beloved,  
Oh ! let it not be said,  
That she can see and hear unmoved,  
Her people cry for bread.  
Then open every, &c.

the changes had been in the direction of simplifying and reducing the tariff. Between 1830 and 1835 taxes to the amount of seven millions were repealed, and in 1836 there was a reduction in the tax on newspapers. North and Pitt had regarded newspapers as luxuries, a more modern spirit was developing that thought them essential to good citizenship.

After 1840 the story of taxation is largely the story of the fight for Free Trade, and of Peel's gradual conversion. The success of the new industries had been great, but they were handicapped by duties on their raw material, duties that the manufacturer did not consider balanced by protective tariffs on the finished article.

Besides he had one great difficulty, if England was to sell she must buy; no really flourishing trade can be founded on a one-sided commerce. Ships that take out textiles must bring back other cargoes or the freight costs of the textiles must be doubled. The obvious return cargoes would be food for the increasing numbers of the factory towns. Here came the bar of the Corn Laws, and when, in 1838, Cobden and others started the Anti-Corn Law League, after a short time during which it hung fire, it was taken up by the entire body of the new middle class. In the controversy that followed, the agricultural and the manufacturing interests were diametrically opposed. The latter claimed that the Corn Laws did not succeed in giving the farmers a high price, but only made possible a speculation that caused great fluctuations; that a flourishing return trade in corn would increase our trade in manufactures and indirectly our shipping; that if we took corn from other countries in return for manufactures there would be no incentive to them to start manufactures of their own which would in time rival ours; that cheaper corn at a stabilized price would relieve much of the current misery among the people. The land interest, on the other hand, declared that both landlords and farmers would be ruined; that to depend on sea-borne food in case of war was suicidal; that the manufacturers only wanted cheap food for their hands in order to reduce wages and increase profits. Such were the views of the

two interests directly involved ; what were those of the workers, also indirectly concerned ? Great efforts were made by the Anti-Corn Law League to enlist the manual workers, but the Chartists opposed them bitterly. Probably their fundamental reason was fear that the league might oust the Charter in the interest of the workmen and put cheap food before more vital reforms. Their openly stated reasons for opposition were : (1) the repeal would hand over the workers more than ever to the mercy of the manufacturers ; (2) a ruined agriculture would mean unemployment to rural labourers ; (3) that cheap food would only mean low wages, since the employee had no means of protection, for Trade Unions had failed and the Charter was not yet won ; (4) low prices chiefly benefited not the wage-earner, but the man who lived on rent and interest ; (5) lowered prices meant a great increase in the real as against the nominal value of the National Debt, and so would benefit fund-holders as against those who paid the interest on the debt, i. e. the taxpayer. The agitation in favour of Free Trade took eight years to succeed, a very short time in comparison with other movements, but it was helped both by chance and by the money and character of the men running it. The men behind it were the pushers of the new age produced by the industrial revolution, and they were rich and believed in spending money and in risking it for a sufficient object. Chance helped them by putting in power a man endowed supremely with the gift of gauging the temper of public opinion. Peel was never before or behind his age, and his working principle was to give the public what it wanted. Chance also threw in to help them famine on a large scale.

In 1842 Peel was feeling his way towards a modification of the protective tariff, and felt strong enough to reduce the number of articles that paid duty from 1,200 to 750. To balance the loss he imposed an income-tax of 7*d.* in the £ on incomes over £150. Farmers were assessed at half their rent, since no one could expect them to keep accounts and so know their profits. In 1845 another 450 articles were removed from the tariff, including glass, and all export duties abolished.

In that year the potato crop failed in Ireland and famine followed. It was impossible to refuse to bring corn supplies to their help, and as next year matters were worse, Peel proposed that the Corn Laws should be repealed by degrees, and by 1849 only a nominal duty of 1s. a quarter should remain. He also repealed other duties on food and raw materials. The split in the Conservative party and the long period of Whig government which followed are matters for political histories. Each year more taxes were repealed, the abominable window tax going in 1851.

In 1853 Gladstone began his series of budgets that left England entirely committed to Free Trade and the principle of taxation for revenue only. He continued the income-tax for seven years with the intention of gradually reducing it to 5*d.*, and he extended the legacy duties, taxing real and settled property equally with personal. Taxes on soap and on advertisements disappeared, and the tea duty was reduced. In 1854 he was faced with the question of paying for war, and decided not to borrow, but pay out of ordinary taxation. The income-tax was doubled and the duty on spirits and malt increased. But in 1855 a deficit of 23 millions was met by borrowing 19 millions, and by throwing the balance on income-tax, tea, coffee, and spirits; the 1856 deficit was entirely met by loan. Altogether in the five years of the Gladstone administration some 11 millions of taxes were lifted.

It will be seen that progress was being made towards the modern simplification by which the bulk of the revenue is raised by income-tax and property tax and duties on drinks.

In 1858 Disraeli made a move backward, took off the 'war ninepence' from the income-tax and borrowed to repay war loan. But in 1859 the Liberals were once more in power, and Gladstone raised the income-tax to 9*d.*, and in 1860 to 10*d.* Cobden negotiated a commercial treaty with France, and duties on her imports into this country were reduced. It was discovered that these reductions entailed no reduction in revenue, as the increased amount of trade balanced the

decreased rate of duty. After 1860 only 48 articles remained on the tariff.

The prosperity of the country caused surpluses in every budget from 1861 to 1865 and the income-tax went down to *4d.*, the tea duty to *6d.*; 1866 was a year of disaster; there was the Overend and Gurney failure, the cattle plague, a Fenian revolt, a deficient harvest, and a strong reform agitation, but even then there was a surplus, which Disraeli allocated to debt reduction. The surpluses of 1869 and 1870 went to lessen taxation, though the National Debt was still over 700 millions. Between 1825 and 1870 the National Debt had only lessened from 800 to 737 millions, while taxation had decreased from *£2 9s. 3d.* per head to *£1 18s. 5½d.* In 1871 Lowe made a powerful appeal to the House to pay off some of the debt, and drew a picture of the remarkable prosperity of the times. Exports and imports were estimated at 860 millions. But the people thought otherwise; why bother to pay debt since everything was going so well? Obviously to so prosperous a people the debt charges on 800 millions were a mere flea-bite. The  $4\frac{3}{4}$  million surplus, or what was left of it when the Alabama claims of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million were paid, went to reduce sugar duty and income-tax. In 1874 the world went very well, and of course would continue to do so.

**Summary.** 1. Chartism was a movement that hoped to redress the grievances of the wage-earner by a series of political reforms. For some fifteen years it dominated the minds of the working classes and caused great fear among the rulers. It was led by divided counsels, especially on the question of force or persuasion as the better instrument, and when the advocates of the former prevailed their boasted strength proved a myth. The movement itself failed completely at the time, but its effect on the history of the next half-century was profound, both as an inspiration and as a warning.

2. Throughout the period the classical economic theories based on the beauty of unlimited competition held the field, and were formulated and consolidated by J. S. Mill. They did not, how-

ever, go unchallenged, and Mill himself towards the end was abandoning several of them. The High Church Movement, the new Conservative Movement, and the Christian Socialists, all in differing ways denied either the premises or the conclusions or both, in the name of humanity or religion. International Socialism made, under Karl Marx, its first attempt to link the workers of the world against their oppressors; it failed.

3. The great reform of the Poor Law was begun in 1834. Its principles were very different from those of the original law of Elizabeth, for its authors believed they could abolish pauperism if they sufficiently ignored its existence. The claim to work or maintenance, implicit in the original law, was denied, and poverty, whether the result of ill chance or ill behaviour, was penalized as a crime. The Elizabethan attempt to distinguish between the professional vagabond and the victim of trade depression was abandoned, and the abuses of an indiscriminating assistance were made the excuse for a refusal of any except under penal conditions. The women, the children, and the incapable were left much as they had been before, with the accumulated abuses of two centuries unreformed, even unrecognized.

4. The great revolutions of this period were in commerce, viz. in communications and in taxation; it was the era of the triumph of Free Trade. The agitation began in the thirties, the principle was admitted in the forties, and the whole reorganization completed in the sixties. England was committed to 'taxation for revenue only'. It was the natural corollary of the *laissez-faire* principles; for the first time in English history Government removed its controlling hand from the doors of trade, and London became the exchange mart of the world's commerce. Only a little was done to reduce the National Debt, which still stood at over 700 millions.



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A view of the First Exhibition of the English Agricultural Society at Oxford, July 17, 1839 (see p. 471).



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