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HISTORY OF ENGLAND

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A

HISTORY OF ENGLAND

CONCLUSION OF THE GREAT WAR IN 1815

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PREFACE

TO THE

REVISED EDITION.

THE History of England from 1815 to the present time may be conveniently grouped into distinct periods. The first of these periods dates from the Peace, and terminates soon after the accession of George IV to the throne; the second commences with the reconstruction of the Liverpool Administration, by the appointment of Peel to the Home Office and of Canning to the Colonial Office, and ends soon after the passage of the Reform Act; the third comprises the history of the Whig Ministry from the passage of the Reform Act to the fall of Melbourne in 1841; the fourth, concerned with the gradual adoption of Free Trade under Peel and Russell, was inaugurated by the Budget of 1842, and was crowned by the repeal of the Navigation Acts in 1849. The first of these periods, during which Englishmen enjoyed less real liberty than at any time since the Revolution of 1688, was a period of Reaction; the second of them, memorable for five great revolutions in law, in commerce, in foreign policy, in religion, and in organic politics, was a period of Reform; the third, which deals not only with the successes of the Whigs under Grey, but with their failures under Melbourne, is concerned with the decline and fall of the Whig Ministry, the fourth relates the triumph of Free Trade

During the same time the foreign policy of the country was subjected to changes as remarkable as those which characterised its domestic policy. Under Castlereagh, this country ranged itself on the side of Autocracy; under Canning and under Palmerston, while Grey remained in power, it supported the cause of Constitutional Government, under Aberdeen, it pursued a policy of Non-Intervention, under Palmerston, it adopted the cause of Nationalities, asserting at the same time its right to protect British interests, or interests which were supposed to be British, and by doing so entered on the drift which eventually involved it in the Crimean War

A mere narrative of the domestic and foreign policy of a nation forms only a portion, and, as some people would say, an unimportant portion, of the history of a nation During the present century the British people has doubled its numbers at home, and occupied and conquered vast territories abroad In the present work, stress has been laid on the causes which have led to the moral and material development of the nation, and an attempt has been made to describe, in brief outline, the events which have brought India under the sovereignty of England, and have led to the introduction of autonomous institutions into the larger British Colonies.

In preparing the work for a new edition, the author has not merely endeavoured to correct the few errors which he has himself detected, or which have been pointed out to him by his critics, but he has also in one or two instances rearranged portions of his narrative, and modified the language in which some of his judgments were expressed in earlier editions

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, ISLE OF MAN,
June 1890

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HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE MATERIAL CONDITION OF ENGLAND IN 1815.

THE story of Waterloo forms the natural and appropriate conclusion of the long and exciting chapter of European history by which it is preceded. The dark war cloud, which had lowered for a quarter of a century over Europe, rolled away with the last wreath of smoke which hung over Napoleon's defeated and disorganised host. A long and cruel war was to be followed by a long and remarkable peace. A brighter dawn was to usher in a happier day. Countries, which again and again had been disfigured by the ruinous havoc of advancing and retreating battalions, were to smile anew. Men, who had been born and reared to manhood to feed the armies which ambition had enrolled or patriotism had organised, were to be permitted to devote their energies and abilities to the prosecution of peaceful industries. The ocean, the common thoroughfare of a world, was again to be opened to the flags of every nation The old rivalry in arms was to be succeeded by a new rivalry in trade and industry. The ploughshare had been beaten, twenty-four years before, into the sword; the sword was to be converted into a pruning-hook.

The dawn after Waterloo

The face of Europe had been rudely disfigured by the bloodshed and the burnings, the sieges and the massacres, which had distinguished the twenty-four preceding years; but the map of Europe had not been materially changed by the victories and defeats which had taken place in the period.

The conqueror of the world had been driven back within his original boundaries, and the title which arms had won had been lost in the shock of arms. The five great powers of Europe at the commencement of the war remained the five great powers at its close. Millions of lives had been wasted; untold treasure had been expended, the progress of civilisation had been checked; nearly every power on the Continent had been humbled in succession, and nearly every continental power found itself, at the close of the struggle, in much the same position which it had occupied at its commencement.

France had suffered more severely, and benefited more largely, than any other power from the protracted warfare which she herself had provoked. France seems destined by nature to occupy the first place among the nations of the Continent. The fertility of her soil, the excellence of her climate, the convenience of her situation, the capacity of her harbours, the genius of her people, combine to give her power in war and advantage in trade. A hundred years before the great Revolution of the eighteenth century a powerful monarch, admirably served by a succession of able ministers, raised her to a position of unprecedented importance and power. Richelieu and Mazarin increased the influence of their country abroad; Colbert studded it with lasting monuments of internal prosperity; Turenne and Luxembourg won for its arms the reputation of invincibility; Vauban protected its territory with fortresses which seemed impregnable. The distant Russian had no power to interfere in the politics of Western Europe, the Austrian Cæsar was compelled to defer to the Grand Monarque; degenerate Spain was expecting, on the death of its weak king, the calamity of a disputed succession, Britain was fretting under the corrupt government of the restored Stuarts France, in one sentence, was supreme in Europe.

France

If Louis were absolute abroad, he was still more absolute in his own dominions The will of the king was the law of the land; and the people submitted, like sheep to a shepherd, to the orders of their ruler. It was enough for them that they

participated in the glories which his arms had achieved, that they witnessed the grandeur with which he was surrounded. Secure under his strong arm, they were able to prosecute their own industries with success. They were, indeed, excluded from all share in the administration of the State, or even of the municipalities in which they resided, but the firm and intelligent government of the king and of his earlier ministers reconciled them to their own political annihilation.

Fifteen years before the close of the seventeenth century the peace of the monarchy was disturbed by the action of the monarch. The Huguenots, who comprised the most industrious and most orderly of his subjects, enjoyed virtual liberty under the Edict of Nantes. The edict had been in force for nearly a century, when it was revoked by the arbitrary act of Louis XIV. Hundreds of thousands of French men and women were compelled to choose between the sacrifice of their faith and the abandonment of their country, and in an evil hour for France hundreds of thousands accepted the hard alternative and left her shores. France was deprived of the most independent and industrious of her population, and had no means of repairing the loss which bigotry had inflicted on her. The loss was the more serious because internal weakness was followed by external complications. The death of the King of Spain let loose once more the dogs of war on Europe, though the circumstances under which the new war broke out differed widely from those under which the last war had closed. England, no longer chafing under a corrupt government, had chosen for a sovereign the first diplomatist in Europe. Her armies, composed of troops of many nations, were under the command of the first soldier of his age. The policy of William survived his life; the genius of Marlborough defied the best efforts of the Grand Monarque and his generals Louis had to consent to a ruinous peace. He had to contemplate a bankrupt exchequer. The situation was grave in the extreme. It required men to save a government which had fallen into disrepute, and, unfortunately for the Bourbons, they depended in the hour of their need on women. Maintenon and Pom-

padour swayed the policy of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. The debauchery of the court, the corruption of the government, the extravagance of the administration, the accumulation of debt, the increase of taxation, all paved the way for the inevitable event. Autocracy stood firm till ruin overtook it, and then surrendered at discretion by summoning the States General.

The course which the Revolution took was horrible, but its excesses may more justly be attributed to the previous conduct of the court than to the ferocity of the people. The farther the arrow is drawn back the farther it will fly, the harder the blow the stronger the rebound. The strength of reaction is measured by the force of the movement which it succeeds. For centuries the people of France had been regarded by the Government as so many cattle; they had been deprived of every privilege; they had borne exclusively the entire weight of the national taxation. They suddenly found themselves in possession of almost absolute power. They used it to accomplish many wise reforms, whose wisdom was forgotten amidst the extravagance and cruelty which unfortunately succeeded them. The force of the flood swept away the men who had raised the sluice gates. The mild despotism of the Bourbons was followed by the sanguinary despotism of the people. France lay weltering in its own blood, and the rest of Europe stood aghast at the spectacle. The inevitable reaction again came. The Terrorists succumbed before a new revolution. The nation, horrified at the use which its delegates had made of the power which had been entrusted to them, transferred the supreme authority to an oligarchy. The oligarchical Directory gave way, in its turn, to a Consulate: the Consulate to an Empire. France, after all her sacrifices, was still at the mercy of one man. She had exchanged a Log for a Stork—a Bourbon for a Napoleon.

The events, which had raised an artillery colonel to the throne of France, were partly attributable to the policy which the other nations of Europe pursued at the juncture. Austria and Prussia, Russia and Great Britain, had no concern with

the internal affairs of France. But emperors and kings, who owed their thrones to what they were pleased to call the grace of God, were reluctant to admit that a monarch only reigned by the grace of his people. Austria and Prussia joined hands to march on Paris and restore a rightful king to his throne. The allies imagined that they had an easy task before them, and that the French rustics would be unable to resist the onslaught of regular troops. But old-fashioned tactics were powerless before the new force to which France had given birth. The great revolutionary wave swept the armies of its opponents, as it had already swept the *émigrés*, from the soil of France. The confederacy had the effect of consolidating the power which it was intended to subdue. Party spirit yielded to the calls of patriotism: division was replaced by union; and the steps, which were taken to replace the monarchy, made the restoration of the monarchy impracticable.

From the hour at which the French peasants learned to stand at Valmy, the course of the Revolution was decided Revolutionary excess found a vent in the passion for military aggrandisement, and France turned against her neighbours the arms which she had been employing against her own citizens From that hour the neutrality of Europe became impossible. From being the attacked, France became the attacking party. From that hour, too, it became certain that France would sooner or later pass under the rule of a successful soldier, and she found in Napoleon one of the most successful soldiers that the world has ever seen. It would be useless to recapitulate here the brilliant achievements which the French accomplished under the guidance of their consul and their emperor. For fifteen years no nation seemed capable of withstanding his power, no general of coping with his daring genius. All Europe was overrun by the French armies, all Europe trembled at the nod of the French emperor. But the gigantic conquests of the conqueror prepared the way for his fall. The supplies from which he drew his armies were exhausted by the prodigal use which he made of them. A disastrous expedition, resulting in the total destruction of the Grand Army, hastened the

collapse which would otherwise have approached more slowly. Europe rose from its despair as the ruins of Napoleon's hosts rolled back from Russia, and Leipsic and Waterloo stripped France of all her conquests, and deprived Napoleon of all his authority.

But, though France had been driven back into her old boundaries, though the legitimate king had been restored to the throne of his ancestors by the bayonets of foreign soldiers, something had been gained by the twenty-five years of alternate suffering and glory through which the nation had passed. The old court corruption, the old feudal privileges, the old oppressions, the carvées, the tithings, the quarterings of troops, had been swept away never to return. A Bourbon was again supreme, but his supremacy was very different from that of his ancestors. A parliament, elected by a popular suffrage, imposed some kind of control on the actions of his ministers, and the king by the grace of God and the help of foreign soldiery depended for the retention of his power on the favour of his people.

Austria.

If Austria had suffered less severely than France, she had won less glory. The House of Hapsburg still retained its hereditary possessions, but it had lost the rich Netherlands which had been ceded to it at Utrecht a century before; and the proud position in central Europe which its representative occupied as Emperor of Germany. At the outbreak of the revolutionary war, three centuries had passed since the election of Maximilian of Austria to the imperial throne. At the close of the revolutionary war, nearly three centuries had passed since the election of Maximilian's grandson Charles to the same dignity had united the great powers of Germany and Spain, and had given the House of Hapsburg predominance in Europe. The imperial dignity was still enjoyed by one of Maximilian's direct descendants. But the fortunes of his family had been subjected in the interval to many vicissitudes. Germany and Spain had again been separated on Charles' abdication, the emperor's brother Ferdinand succeeding to the empire, the emperor's son Philip in-

heriting the Spanish throne. The remoter causes which ultimately led to the decline and fall of Spain had their origin in events which happened before even Philip's birth. But his intolerable bigotry hastened a crisis which a more prudent man might possibly have averted, and might probably have postponed. The empire which had formed the most important portion of the possessions of Charles V. was reserved for a nobler history.

Ferdinand succeeded to all the hereditary possessions which his brother Charles had held in Germany. He acquired the kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia by marriage. Enlarged by these acquisitions, Austria maintained its position in Europe for nearly two centuries. During this period it passed through a greater number of crises than any other State. During the sixteenth century Austria was the barrier on which the waves of Mohammedan invasion beat in vain. During the first half of the seventeenth century she was the champion of the Roman Catholic faith; during the next hundred years she was repeatedly opposed to the power of France; and in 1740 the accession of Maria Theresa to the throne threatened her with dismemberment. Austria was opposed to the boldest tactician of the age, and was exposed to the brunt of the great Frederick's attack. She was unable to prevent the consolidation of the Russian empire, or the permanent loss of one of her own provinces. But the Seven Years' War had been as fatal to other countries, and Maria Theresa, on her death-bed, had the satisfaction of leaving her empire prosperous and peaceful.

Maria Theresa died in 1780 Two of her sons, Joseph and Leopold, successively succeeded to her dominions; her daughter, Marie Antoinette, was married to Louis XVI. The misfortunes of his unhappy sister naturally induced Leopold to interfere in her favour, and notwithstanding the traditional jealousy, which separated the two countries, Prussia and Austria entered into an alliance against revolution in France. Leopold did not long survive the treaty which he thus made. He had the good fortune to die before the misery of his sister was complete, or the disasters which were already threatening

had overtaken his country. A long war, or rather a series of wars, weakened the power of the Austrian empire. The first of these wars was concluded in 1797 by the treaty of Campo Formio. Austria was compelled to cede Flanders, the left bank of the Rhine, and all her Italian provinces, to her victorious antagonist. She gained the doubtful advantage of acquiring the Venetian territory, which Napoleon permitted her to seize. In the second of these wars Austria made a gallant, and at first successful, effort to recover her lost territory. But Marengo in Italy, and Hohenlinden in the Black Forest, enabled the French to repeat at Luneville, in 1801, the conditions which they had imposed at Campo Formio in 1797. At the outset of the third war Mack's surrender at Ulm opened the road to Vienna, and allowed Napoleon to enter the capital of Austria without even fighting a pitched battle. The victory of Austerlitz confirmed the impression which the fall of Vienna had already made. A peace was hastily drawn up at Presburg, by which Austria consented to fresh sacrifices. The confederation of the Rhine, partly formed out of the spoils of which she was stripped, formed a barrier between her and France; and the emperor, driven from his German dominions, was compelled to renounce the title which his family had enjoyed for centuries. The Emperor of Germany became Emperor of Austria.

Three disastrous wars, such as those which were concluded at Campo Formio, at Luneville, and at Presburg, would have destroyed the power of almost any State. Austria, however, had no sooner obtained the respite which she required, than she commenced preparations for renewing the struggle. War again broke out in 1809; and, though the French were again ultimately successful, the contest proved more equal than on any previous occasion. Vienna fell; but the fall of Vienna was the signal for the most memorable struggle which Europe had yet seen. The Austrians, under the guidance of the Archduke Charles, compelled Napoleon to retreat from the field of Aspern. The fearful struggle at Wagram increased the glory with which Aspern had already surrounded the arms

of Austria. Austria for the fourth time was compelled to conclude peace with her conqueror. The treaty of Vienna imposed on her fresh sacrifices, but it restored the laurels which she had previously lost.

Within six months of the date on which the treaty of Vienna was signed, Napoleon obtained a divorce from the Empress Josephine, and married Maria Louisa, the daughter of the Emperor of Austria. The marriage enabled Austria to withdraw from the struggle in which she had suffered such serious reverses. For more than three years she remained at peace; but the three years during which she was at peace were big with the fate of the world. The standards of France were rolled back from the ruins of Moscow, the French troops were gradually forced to relax their hold on Spain, and to retreat across the Pyrenees Napoleon, posted on the Elbe, still defied the united efforts of Russia, Prussia, and Sweden; and Austria, urged in one direction by the natural affection of its emperor for his daughter, impelled in the other by a traditional jealousy of French aggrandisement, hesitated to take part in the contest. For a few weeks Francis and Metternich seemed likely to be the arbiters of Europe, for a few weeks the issue of the contest was apparently to be determined by diplomatists at Vienna. Had Napoleon been less confident in his genius or less extortionate in his demands, this result would unquestionably have occurred. But Napoleon, in the moment of his first reverse, preferred the chances of the sword to the tender consideration of his imperial father-in-law. Austria, deprived of the rôle which she had chosen, was compelled to throw her weight into the scale against him. The victory of Dresden seemed for the moment to justify Napoleon's decision, and Europe was again apparently prostrate before its unrelenting conqueror. But the reverse at Culm robbed the great victory of the consequences which might otherwise have ensued from it. A series of disasters drove the French from the Elbe to the Saale, from the Saale to the Rhine, from the Rhine to Paris. Napoleon, from a reluctance to cede any of his conquests, was deprived of every-

thing, and the allied powers at Vienna and Paris divided among themselves the spoils of the contest. Austria gained largely from the pacification of 1815. She was confirmed in the possession of Venetia, she was rewarded by the acquisition of Lombardy, and she received in addition Illyria, Dalmatia, and other minor acquisitions. But the events of the war had deprived her of the Austrian Netherlands. She had lost the position in Western Europe which these provinces had afforded her, and she had become an eastern rather than a western power. Nor was her strength increased by the possession of Venetia and Lombardy, though these acquisitions extended her area and augmented her resources. The people of these provinces were hostile to her rule, and their hostility was pregnant with future disasters. The Emperor of Austria still remained the autocratic head of a huge and disorganised territory, a numerous and discontented people. The ability of his minister Metternich raised him to the first rank among the autocrats of Europe. But the new conditions under which the world was to move were to place inert autocracies at a disadvantage. The Austrian eagle still spread its wings with its old confidence, but the wounds from which it was suffering reduced the range of its flight and limited its power.

Prussia

The history of Prussia had been much shorter than that of Austria; but it had been much more glorious. At the outbreak of the Revolution in France only a century and a half had elapsed since the accession of Frederick William, the Great Elector, to the electorate of Brandenburg. Less than ninety years had passed since the Great Elector's son had become first King of Prussia. Less than thirty years had passed since the great Frederick had raised his country for the first time in her story to the front rank, and against overwhelming odds had brought the Seven Years' War to an honourable and advantageous conclusion. His successor had been the first to throw down the gauntlet to revolutionary France. Prussia did not fall so rapidly as Austria before the arms of Napoleon. It was not until her army had been shattered at Jena in 1806 that her territories

were dismembered and her power was destroyed. The degradation of Prussia was apparently complete, but the genius of one man saved her from annihilation. Napoleon imagined that he had placed an effectual restraint upon the people whom he had subdued by stipulating that their standing army should never exceed a certain strength. The Prussians, however, were driven by this stipulation to organise the most formidable force which Europe had yet seen. Passing successive relays of the population through the ranks, they succeeded in training an entire people to the use of arms. Prussia was thus enabled, when the French met with their first reverse, to rise in unprecedented strength, and to wreak a terrible vengeance upon her conqueror at Leipsic She shared with Great Britain the crowning honour of the brief campaign which terminated at Waterloo

Russia

The huge empire which is now known as Russia, and which comprises nearly a seventh part of the land on the surface of the globe, has only gradually attained its enormous dimensions, and only recently acquired its preponderating influence in Europe. In ancient history Russia was only known as the remote and impenetrable territory from which hordes of barbarous tribes made their occasional inroads into Western Europe. In mediæval history Russia, under the dominion of the Tartars, was effectually separated from European politics by the intervening kingdom of Poland. It was only in the later half of the fourteenth century that Ivanovitch, the descendant of Ruric, succeeded in shaking off the Tartar yoke, and in establishing himself in partially independent rule at Moscow. The independence of the new State was, however, long doubtful. A hundred years after the death of Ivanovitch the Tartars returned in almost irresistible strength, and threatened its overthrow. Muscovy was not wholly emancipated from Tartar rule till after the accession of Ivan the Terrible. The horrible cruelties which disgraced the reign of this merciless tyrant have made his name execrable; but his able and determined rule emancipated his country from the Tartars and extended the limits of his empire. The

race of Ivan and of Ruric died out with Feodor at the close of the sixteenth century. The Russians in 1613 selected Mikhail, or Michael, as their new Czar. Mikhail was the head of the noble house of Romanoff, which thus acquired a position among the reigning families of Europe

The grandson of Mikhail, Peter I, or Peter the Great, as he is usually called, in the first instance shared the throne with his brother Ivan, but obtained sole possession of it in 1689. The empire of Russia dates from his accession. The capital during his reign was removed from Moscow to a new city, Petersburg, which the Emperor founded on the banks of the Neva. At the date of Peter's accession to the throne, his three most powerful neighbours were Sweden, Poland, and Turkey. Gustavus Adolphus had raised the first of these countries to a high position in Europe, and had made her the arbiter of the North. It was almost inevitable that she should come into collision with the new power which was gradually consolidating itself on her eastern flank. The temperament of Charles XII, who succeeded to the throne in 1697, precipitated the conflict For some years the Swedes taxed to the uttermost the disorganised resources of the Russian empire. Peter was totally defeated on the Narva, and his conqueror, marching into the heart of Russia, threatened to dictate terms of peace at Moscow. Russia, however, in 1700 possessed the same inherent power of defence which she displayed more than a century afterwards. It was possible to defeat her armies, but it was impracticable to conquer her territory. Taught the lessons of war by contact with the Swedes, slowly gathering their almost endless resources together, the Russians, after a long humiliation, won the battle of Pultowa. From that time till the present day Russia has maintained an unquestioned predominance in Northern Europe.

Charles XII., defeated at Pultowa, fled to the mighty empire which marched on the southern boundaries of his conqueror's dominions. The Ottoman power was at that time already declining, but the Turks still retained the reputation which their victorious career had given them. The Porte,

which had already experienced the rising power of the new empire of the North, readily afforded Charles the refuge which he sought. Peter, after completing his conquest of the Swedes, turned his arms against the people among whom Charles had taken refuge. His expedition, however, resulted in a signal discomfiture. Hemmed in by an overwhelming force of Turks on the banks of the Pruth, he was compelled to accept a ruinous peace. The dexterity of his consort, and the corruption of his enemies, alone saved the Russians from terms even more disastrous than those to which they were forced to accede.

The unceasing rivalry, which has since existed between Russia and Turkey, may be dated from the reign of Peter the Great. But the contest has since that time been conducted on conditions which pointed from the first to the ultimate victory of the Russians. The gradual decay of the Mohammedan power made the Ottomans more and more feeble for the purposes of offensive warfare. The gradual organisation of the Russian empire rendered Russia a more and more formidable assailant. The process of decay on the one side was, however, frequently retarded by the energy which individual Turks threw into the government of the Porte. The process of organisation, on the other, was often stopped by the wars or by the corruption of the Russian government. Russia, in fact, had other work in the eighteenth century to perform. Poland still existed as an independent kingdom on her western frontier, and Poland was ruthlessly partitioned among the neighbouring powers. By the acquisition of Warsaw, Russia thrust herself like a wedge into Europe, and for the first time acquired an important influence. The events of the revolutionary war confirmed her authority. The conqueror who had subdued a continent recoiled from Russian territory. Friedland and the Borodino showed conclusively the worth of Russian soldiers. The burning of Moscow proved to the astonished victor that reverses which would have broken any other European power had no effect on the Russian empire. Russia rose from her temporary prostration to march in

triumph upon Paris, and a Russian army occupied the splendid capital of the French empire

Russia had not had the sole merit of producing the fall of Napoleon; but the Czar of Russia had much greater influence in the councils which succeeded the war than either the Emperor of Austria or the King of Prussia. Francis of Austria owed his weight in congress to the ability of Metternich Alexander of Russia derived his authority from the force of his own character. There was much in his disposition which was calculated to excite the regard and admiration of his contemporaries. Sincerely desirous of peace, he firmly believed that the memorable events, in which he had played so distinguished a part, ought to secure the blessings of a long peace to an exhausted Continent Madame Krudener persuaded him to originate an alliance with Austria and Prussia for this purpose. Justice, Christian charity, and peace were to be the guiding motives of the three potentates in future The reign of peace which was thus inaugurated, was, however, emphatically a peace of sovereigns The peace, at which Alexander aimed, involved the implicit obedience of every nation to the orders of those who happened to be its rulers. It wholly ignored the novel doctrine that the people themselves had a right to influence the actions of their governors. Such a doctrine was incomprehensible to the mighty autocrat who was absolute ruler over all the Russians The victors, who had restored the map of Western Europe to its original shape, seemed to him to have little or nothing to do with the feelings of the populace beneath them.

Minor States.

So far as the great continental countries were concerned, twenty years of constant warfare had made comparatively small changes. But in other respects the map of Europe had been materially modified. The victors in the moment of their triumph had imitated the conduct to which they themselves had been exposed on their defeat; and Russia, Austria, and Prussia, had contended for considerable additions to their territory in return for the sacrifices which they had made. Great Britain alone required no continental

kingdom, and stood opposed to the desire of her allies for aggrandisement. Her influence, however, could not instil moderation into their hearts. Russia permanently extended her sway beyond the Vistula. Belgium, though Roman Catholic in faith, was annexed to the Protestant kingdom of Holland. Prussia repaid herself for her exertions by seizing upon a portion of the kingdom of Saxony. Austria obtained compensation for the loss of the Netherlands in the romantic city which is seated on the waves of the Adriatic. Tuscany and Modena, Italian in their sympathies and in their connections, were handed over to the dominion of Austrian archdukes; and Genoa, which had attained her prosperity under republican institutions, was annexed against her will to the kingdom of Piedmont. The power of the conquerors was so great, the prostration of France was so complete, that the minor nations of Europe had no alternative but submission to these arrangements. A few men, sitting in congress, disposed of the fate of millions of Europeans. People, in the view of an Alexander, or a Frederic, or a Francis, were only born to be governed, and autocratic princes, ruling by the will of heaven, were entitled to dispose of them as they chose. The sentiment was in strict accordance with the principles on which the French revolutionary war had been originally undertaken. It was totally opposed to the ideas on which the Revolution had been founded, and which even the triumphs of the allies had not extirpated from men's minds. A few statesmen were already in existence who questioned both the prudence and the propriety of disposing of whole peoples like flocks of sheep, and of settling governments and nations against the will of the nationality. A few wise men predicted that the settlement of 1815 contained in it the seeds of future trouble. Predictions of this kind carried no weight at the time. Europe, sickened of war, would have submitted to any settlement Countries, which had been the constant scene of hostilities, imagined that any fate was preferable to a new appeal to arms, and the settlement of 1815 was tolerated, not because it was just, but because the world was weary of

bloodshedding, and too exhausted to dispute the will of the conquerors.[1]

Great Britain.

Great Britain had not participated in the spoils which the allied powers had extorted from France. Though she had borne the chief burthen of the contest, and the struggle had been sustained by her resources, alone among the allies she forbore to claim any return for the enormous sacrifices which the war had entailed on her. Yet the effect of the struggle had been to raise her to the first place among nations. It had repaired the losses which she had sustained in the earlier years of the reign of George III. No sovereign had ever inherited a nobler dominion than that to which George III. succeeded on the death of his grandfather in 1760. The dangers, which the glorious Revolution of 1688 had created, were rapidly passing away; the fortunate change in a dynasty and a constitution were producing the happiest results. Constitutional government had superseded the arbitrary rule of the degenerate Stuarts, and a free people, strong in their freedom, were extending their empire, their trade, and their influence. Marlborough, by his skill in arms, Walpole, by the prudence of his government, Chatham, by the vigour of his administration, had promoted the prosperity of their country at home, and had increased her influence abroad; while Clive in one hemisphere, and Wolfe in another, had conquered empires for the crown of England. Scotland, contented with the union, was submitting herself quietly to the House of Hanover; England, reveling in her new prosperity,

[1] "The first business," says Southey, with remarkable prevision, "should have been to have reduced France to what she was before Louis XIV.'s time; the second to have created a great power in the North of Germany with Prussia at its head; the third to have consolidated Italy into one kingdom or commonwealth."—Dowden's *Southey*, p. 150.

"I mentioned," wrote Romilly of his speech on the peace, "that among other articles carried from Paris, under pretence of restoring them to their rightful owners, were the Corinthian horses which had been brought from Venice; but how strange an act of justice was this, to give them back their statues, but not to restore to them those far more valuable possessions, their territory and their republic, which were at the same time wrested from the Venetians."—*Romilly*, iii. 226.

was loyally attached to the dynasty which had conferred on her so many material advantages; and even Ireland only required fair treatment and a firm government. The Pretender was in Rome; the last expedition of Prince Charlie had terminated in disaster; and no descendant of the Stuarts virtually contested the right of the new dynasty. England, in one sentence, was happy at home and respected abroad.

The new king was, unfortunately, a very young man; he was imbued with singular views of personal government, and he had not yet acquired the experience which, later in his life, would undoubtedly have induced him to place himself in the hands of his constitutional advisers. Yet he had qualities which command respect. George III. was the most industrious and persevering king who ever governed this country. It was his constant habit, throughout his reign, to peruse and master every document submitted to him by his ministers. He persevered in the contest with America when all his advisers thought perseverance hopeless. "I will be very free with you," he said to the first American minister: "I was the last to consent to the separation of the United States from the British empire." Yet George III, as a boy, was the most indolent among princes. He is said to have met the remonstrances of his tutor with the excuse that he was "constitutionally idle." The constitutionally idle boy, within ten years, became the hardest worker of all his countrymen. George III.

Qualities, which are rightly accounted as virtues in other men, are occasionally dangerous when they are found in princes. Every parent would rejoice to have a son whose parts were so excellent, whose judgment was so clear, and whose industry was so unflagging, as the parts, the judgment, and industry of George III. Yet no careful reader of history can doubt that these qualities in the king, on more than one occasion, imperilled the existence of the British monarchy. George III's capacity for work naturally tempted him to transact a great deal of business himself. It was inevitable that an industrious and capable young man should seek occa-

sions for turning his industry and capacity to account. In consequence, during the greater part of his reign, George III. exercised a close supervision over affairs which it would have been much better for him to have left to his ministers to regulate.[1] Had the supervision of the king, however, been confined to the details of administration, the results would not have been disastrous But it was George III 's misfortune to have been reared in a school where the notions of kingship were totally opposed to the principles of constitutional monarchy. "Be a king!" was his mother's characteristic advice to him on her deathbed; and "to be a king" in the continental sense of the term was the great object of George III.'s ambition. As a king, he dismissed the great Lord Chatham, and threw off the dominion of the Whig aristocracy; as a king, he selected the unfortunate and incompetent Bute for a minister, as king, he resisted the righteous revolt of America, as king, he refused to concede the just claims of his Roman Catholic subjects. Every act of his kingship proved disastrous to himself and unfortunate for his country. His rupture with the Whig aristocrats exposed him to the narrow-minded counsels of George Grenville; his policy towards America led directly to the independence of the United States; his opposition to the Roman Catholic claims led to his one great success, but the success was purchased at the cost of his reason.

The first five-and-twenty years of George III.'s reign form an unfortunate era in the history of Great Britain. But, before

[1] Mr. Froude has published (*The English in Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 140) a singular letter which the young king, in the earlier years of his reign, addressed to his representative in Ireland. The communication undoubtedly forms a remarkable State paper. It is full of admirable advice; it evidently proves that the king understood the Irish difficulty at least as well as some of his counsellors. It deserves, as a State paper, the commendation which the historian bestows upon it. But though, if it had been the production of a minister, it would receive almost unqualified admiration, it is very doubtful whether it merits any admiration at all as the work of a king. Constitutional monarchs have other things to do than to compose remarkable State papers. They are certainly precluded by their position from composing papers on State policy which are to be kept secret from their own advisers.

the five-and-twenty years were quite concluded, a new statesman, cast in a different mould from that of either Bute or Grenville, unexpectedly rose on the political horizon. William Pitt inherited from his father the great qualities which had enrolled Lord Chatham's name amongst the chief worthies of England. A feeble body had not interfered with the growth of a vigorous mind, and the beardless young man, only twenty-three years of age, proved himself at the outset of his career a match for the most formidable of his opponents. A financier at a time when many men are still reading for their degree, prime minister of England at an age when most barristers are still studying for their profession, Pitt undoubtedly owed much to his father's reputation, but he owed more to his own abilities, and the confidence which he had in them. The spectacle of the youthful minister standing up night after night to battle with an Opposition, confident in its numbers and formidable for its ability, is hardly less remarkable than the victory which he gained over his adversaries, and the use which he made of the power secured for him by his triumph. Pitt, as a minister, had two difficulties to contend with. He had to deal with the unconstitutional claims of a sovereign to whom he was personally indebted; he had to reform the abuses of a government which was founded on a system of exclusion, and which drew its chief revenue from duties whose existence hampered the trade and fettered the industry of the nation.

It is to Pitt's honour that he should have remedied one of these evils, and that he should have attempted to deal with the other of them. George III. found in Pitt an adviser, not a minister; and though, on one memorable occasion, conscientious scruples unfortunately induced the monarch to adhere to his own principles, the obstinacy which obtained for Protestantism a few years more of superiority deprived the throne of the services of the man who was most capable of upholding it. It is even more creditable to Pitt that he should have promoted a large scheme of parliamentary reform, and that he should have attempted to relieve the trade of the kingdom from the fetters which shackled it. The revolutionary

wave which swept over Europe, whose influence was even perceptible on these shores, drove him indeed from his admirable purpose into an opposite policy; but the man who blames Pitt for his later conduct should in justice remember the liberal spirit which pervaded his earlier administration.

It is easy to see now that neither Europe generally, nor this country in particular, had any reason to intervene in the lamentable scenes which deluged France with blood in the closing decade of the eighteenth century. She had not interfered with the monstrous abuses which had disfigured the government of the Bourbons, she had no concern with the monstrous excesses which discredited the cause of popular liberty. The horrible scenes which were acted in Paris, the flight of the king, his capture, his judicial murder, ought to have excited the indignation of Europe; they ought not to have demanded its interposition. Unhappily, however, in the eighteenth century the cause of monarchy was identified with the cause of order, and other European nations witnessed the degradation of a king in France with much the same feelings with which the Americans would contemplate the creation of a king in Canada. The cause of monarchy was supposed to be universally attacked by the destruction of monarchy in France, and the great sovereigns of Europe interfered, not so much to restore Louis XVI., as to prevent their own dethronement. If, however, the sovereigns of Europe should have refrained from intervention, it is evident that, if they intervened at all, they should at least have done so effectually. The road to Paris was open; the French people were broken up into parties; they had no army, no money, and no credit. A determined general, at the head of a well organised expedition, must have succeeded in forcing his way to Paris and in restoring order. Unhappily the allies were jealous of each other, and uncertain what to do. Their generals, instead of marching, manœuvred; they indulged in purposeless cannonades, and abstained from direct attacks. Their imbecility and vacillation served a double purpose. Their own troops were dispirited, their enemies were educated. The revolutionary wave which was

deluging France with blood, found an outlet in military ambition.

The fearful war which was thus wantonly commenced continued with short intervals for twenty-four years. During the course of it every power but one deserted in turn the cause which had been undertaken in common; every power but one suffered the penalty of a French invasion. England alone, with one short interval of peace, persevered from the commencement to the close of the struggle. England alone was saved from the humiliation of invasion. Yet Englishmen can look back at the earlier events of the war with only slight satisfaction. The brilliant victories at sea, which made this country the first naval power in the world, barely atoned for the discreditable part which she played on land. The most important expedition which she attempted ended in a mere military parade. The subsidies which she lavished on her allies did not save them from defeat or deter them from deserting her.

During the whole of Pitt's short life—though not solely from Pitt's fault—this state of things continued. When he died, Trafalgar had made his country absolute mistress of the seas. Austerlitz had made Napoleon the master of the Continent. Jena, Friedland, Wagram, Tilsit, and Vienna confirmed the supremacy which the French emperor had thus acquired; and, at the commencement of 1809, Napoleon could almost boast that he had no more enemies to subdue. It would be useless, in these prefatory remarks, to refer to the well known circumstances which ultimately led to the prostration of the French empire. The determination of Buonaparte to seat his own brother on the throne of Spain; the fortunate decision of the Portland ministry to support the waning cause of Europe in the Peninsula; the happy selection of the Duke of Wellington as the commander of the British troops; the steady perseverance of successive British ministers, the ability of the commander, the bravery of the army, the outbreak of the Russian war, the retreat of the French from the Kremlin and the simultaneous bursting by the British of the southern barrier

of France—these are all events with which every child is familiar, and which it cannot be necessary to detail. Waterloo fixed a stamp to the supremacy which England had acquired, and the British empire rose from the struggle the first power in the world.

Before the commencement of the present century nothing definite was known about the population of the country which had thus acquired the first place among nations. Macaulay, indeed, infers from comparatively reliable data that the entire population of England and Wales in the closing decade of the seventeenth century did not exceed 5,500,000, or fall short of 5,000,000 persons.[1] Respectable authorities may, however, be cited to prove that Macaulay has rather underestimated than exaggerated the number,[2] and 5,500,000 persons is the very lowest estimate which can be fairly made of the inhabitants of England and Wales in 1690. One hundred and eleven years afterwards, or in 1801, the same country only contained 8,873,000 persons. More than a century of progress had only added some 3,000,000 to the number of its people. Its population in 1816 probably amounted (taking the mean between the populations of 1811 and 1821) to upwards of 11,000,000. Notwithstanding the war which this country had been conducting, the increase of its population in only fifteen years had been two-thirds as great as that which had taken place during the previous century.

Population.

Scotland, in one sense, was a much more backward country than England. In the middle of the eighteenth century, English roads were intolerably bad; but Scotland, it might almost have been said, had no roads. English agriculture was backward; but Scotland was uncultivated. English in-

[1] Mr. Rickman calculated the number at 6,045,008 in 1700. See Preface to *Census Returns* of 1841, pp. 36, 37, and note to Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 13. This estimate is probably much more accurate than Macaulay's.

[2] The reader who is curious on this point will find some interesting information upon it in Somers' *Tracts*, where (vol. x. p 596) Houghton estimates the number of inhabited houses at 1,175,951. Davenant placed the number of houses in 1690 at 1,391,215. See Anderson's *Hist. of Commerce*, vol ii. p. 594. Cf. also *Apology for the Builder*, published in Lord Overstone's collection of Tracts.

dustry was unimportant; but Scotland had neither industries nor trade. A journey from London to Edinburgh was a more difficult and a more hazardous undertaking than a journey from London to New York is now; and the traveller, like Johnson or Wordsworth, who attempted a tour in the Highlands, was forced to ride, and to submit to more inconveniences than a tourist would meet with now in the wildest parts of Europe. Yet the development of Scotland was proceeding at least as rapidly as that of England and Wales. The events of 1745 taught the Government the necessity of military roads; and roads formed for military purposes materially promoted the prosperity of the kingdom. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, Scotland made unexpected progress. Her lowlands were gradually converted from a barren waste into the garden of Great Britain. The Clyde, improved by Scotch enterprise, shared the trade of the Mersey; the manufactories of Dundee robbed Belfast of its supremacy in linen; and Edinburgh, deprived of the pomp which is usually associated with a capital, increased with a rapidity which, in former days, it had never known. In 1801 Scotland was found to contain 1,599,000 persons. Its population in 1816 may fairly be computed to have consisted of 1,950,000 persons.

No census was taken in Ireland till the year 1813. Nothing, therefore, is known exactly of the increase of the population of that unhappy country before that time. The census of 1813 was in many respects incomplete. The numbers were never made up for Louth, Westmeath, Wexford, Cavan, Donegal, and Sligo. There are fair grounds, however, for believing that the population at that time was not less than 5,400,000, and did not exceed 5,600,000. The number of the people in 1821 was found to have increased to 6,801,000; and it is, probably, therefore not very inaccurate to conclude that the population of Ireland in 1816 amounted to about 6,000,000 souls.

Thus at the conclusion of the great war the population of the United Kingdom (including the smaller islands) must have exceeded 19,000,000. At the commencement of it, England and Wales had not, probably, more than 8,500,000; Scotland

had not more than 1,500,000; and Ireland had not more than 4,000,000 inhabitants. At the very highest estimate, therefore, the United Kingdom had commenced the struggle with only 14,000,000 of persons. At the very lowest estimate she retired from it with 19,000,000. The growth of the people, which had taken place in the interval, was the more remarkable when it was compared with that of our great rival. France had entered the revolutionary war with a population of 26,363,000 In 1817, when she had again been reduced to her "ancient limits, the population returns gave a total of 29,217,465."[1] The United Kingdom, in the interval, had added 5,000,000 souls to its 14,000,000 inhabitants. France, on the contrary, had added only 1,500,000 to every 14,000,000 of her people. The disparity between the rival nations was being rapidly removed; and the argument, on which Napoleon mainly relied, that his own superior numbers must ultimately assure him a victory, was becoming continually weaker.

Fourteen millions of people, increasing in a quarter of a century to nineteen millions, had in less than a generation raised their country to the first place in the world.

The National Debt.

But the victory had been won at a tremendous cost. In the year 1792, the last complete year of peace, the entire debt of the United Kingdom only slightly exceeded £239,650,000. In 1815, the last year of the war, the debt of the United Kingdom reached £861,000,000.[2] The debt in 1792 imposed a charge of £9,301,000 on Great Britain, and of £131,000 on Ireland. The charge of the debt in

[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 18. The Irish Railway Commmissioners, in 1837, said the population was 2,010,221 in 1731, and 4,206,602 in 1791. See *Parl. Papers*, 1837, vol. xxxiii. p 685. Their estimate seems to have been made by Drummond. See M'Lennan's *Drummond*, p. 254. Lord Colchester, who was Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1802, says that the population at that time was estimated by one leading Irishman at 3,000,000, and by another at 4,000,000. *Colchester*, vol. i. p. 273. Wellington, speaking in the House of Lords, said that the population was estimated when Maynooth was founded (*i.e.* in 1795) at 3,000,000. *Hansard*, 3rd series, vol. lxxx. p 466

[2] See the important return, Session 1858, No. 443, pp. 78, 79. Porter gives the total at £885,000,000 (*Progress of the Nation*, p. 482); but he apparently includes in this sum the proximate value of the annuities which were never at that time officially calculated.

1815 had risen (without the sinking fund) to £32,645,618. The gigantic debt, which had thus been rapidly accumulated, was of very recent origin. The earlier kings of England had, indeed, like their later successors, frequent occasions for more money than their revenues afforded them. But the art of borrowing was in its infancy; the best security was bad; money-lenders refused to advance their money on bad security, except at high rates of interest; and high rates of interest were illegal by the laws of man, and reprobated (so churchmen taught) by the laws of God. When one of the earlier kings of this country required money, he anticipated his revenue if he were an honest man; or he raised a forced loan from the Jews if he were a dishonest one. The creditor, in return for his loan, received a tally; and the loan was said to be borrowed on the security of the tally. It is probable that a good many people now are ignorant of the meaning of a word which a few centuries ago was in common use among their ancestors.

The tally was originally a rough piece of wood which our ancestors cut or notched to assist them to count.[1] Just, however, as the five-pound note exceeds in finish and perfection

[1] "Score" (which is the past participle of the old Saxon verb shear, and which is the same word as shore) "when used for the number twenty, has been well and rationally accounted for by supposing that our unlearned ancestors, to avoid the embarrassment of large numbers, when they had made twice ten notches cut off the piece or tally (taglié) containing them, and afterwards counted the scores or pieces cut off, and reckoned by the number of separated pieces or by scores. This ancient manner of reckoning is humorously noted by Shakespeare. 'Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school, and whereas before our grandfathers had no other books but the *score* and the *tally*, thou hast caused printing to be used.'" Horne Tooke, *Diversions of Purley*, part ii. p. 427. Tallies were still in use in Ireland at the commencement of the present century. "It's a tally, plase your honour," says the Widow O'Neill, in the "Absentee." "Oh, you're a foreigner it's the way the labourers do keep the account of the day's work with the overseer, the bailiff, a notch for every day the bailiff makes on his stick, and the labourer the like on his stick, to tally. and when we come to make up the account it's by the notches we go." *Tales of Fashionable Life*, vol. vi. p. 175 The same system was in use in the mining districts in the middle of the century, the tally, however, being called by the miners "a cut." In Scotland the tallies were apparently called "nick-sticks." At least Monkbarns was annoyed when his baker sent him "a book instead o' the nick-sticks." *Antiquary*, chap. xv.

of workmanship the ordinary piece of paper on which this sentence is printed, so the tally of loan surpassed the rude tally of the innkeeper or the tradesman. But just as the five-pound note is, after all, nothing but a bit of paper, so the tally of loan was nothing but a bit of wood.[1] This rude system of borrowing money continued in force till a very recent period. Up to the reign of Henry VI. money was borrowed by the sovereign on his own security. In the reign of Henry VI, Parliament authorised the crown, on four separate occasions, to raise money by loan, and took the burden of the debt upon its own shoulders. Two more centuries elapsed before the legislature, in the reign of Charles II., formally authorised the crown to issue public negotiable securities bearing 6 per cent. interest. This issue marked the commencement of the modern National Debt of England. But it was attended with unfortunate consequences. Within eight years, Charles, on the advice of Clifford, closed the exchequer. The unfortunate creditors received for a few years the interest of their debt, though this payment was at last suspended; and, after carrying a suit against the crown from the inferior courts to the Chancellor, and from the Chancellor to the House of Lords, the creditors of the State were compelled to forego their entire claim to interest, and accept as a full discharge one-half of their original debt, or £664,263. This £664,263 is the oldest portion of the National Debt.

The Revolution of 1688 succeeded. The hereditary revenues of the crown were obviously insufficient for the heavy expenditure in which the Government was unavoidably in-

[1] A flat piece of well-seasoned wood was selected. "The sum of money which it bore was cut in notches by the cutter of the tallies, and likewise written upon two sides of it by the writer of the tallies. The tally was cleft in the middle by the deputy-chamberlain with a knife and a mallet through the shaft and the notches, whereby it made two halves, each half having a superscription and a half part of the notch or notches. It being thus divided or cleft, one part was called a tally, the other a counter-tally, and when these two parts came afterwards to be joined, if they were genuine they fitted so exactly that they appeared evidently to be parts the one of the other." Madox, *Hist. of Exchequer*, fol. ed., p. 709, and Return, Sess. 1858, p. 443 It was the burning of the old tallies that led to the destruction of the Houses of Parliament

volved; and Parliament, in granting liberal supplies, wisely insisted on the proper appropriation and audit of the money which they voted. Charles Montague, subsequently Lord Halifax, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer at this period, is generally known as one of the poets whom Johnson has honoured with a life; but he deserves much more to be remembered as the first of the great financiers whom this country has produced. With the aid of Newton he reformed the currency; for the sake of replenishing the treasury he introduced exchequer bills; and by his admirable qualities he conducted the financial affairs of the country with success in a period of unprecedented difficulty. But Charles Montague's invention of exchequer bills was not the only innovation in the art of borrowing for which the reign of William and Mary is remarkable. In this reign the first general mortgage, as it was called, was raised; life annuities, tontine annuities, and annuities for terms of years, were first invented; the Bank of England was incorporated, and the first loan was obtained from the Bank; the new East India Company was constituted, and another loan was obtained for the State as the price of its constitution. Parliament had exchanged its own security for that of the king, and had raised by so doing the credit of the nation.

At the commencement of the reign of William III., the country was practically free from debt. At the close of it, a debt of £12,500,000 imposed a charge of more than £1,200,000 a year on the nation. The war of the Spanish Succession added to the burden. The debt at the peace of Utrecht reached nearly £35,000,000; the charge upon it exceeded £3,000,000 a year. When Sir Robert Walpole commenced his memorable administration in 1721, the capital of the debt stood at £54,400,000; the interest at £2,855,000. The war of the Austrian Succession raised the capital to £75,800,000; the interest to £3,165,000. The Seven Years' War raised the capital to £132,000,000; the interest to £5,000,000. The American War increased the capital to £232,000,000; the interest to £9,000,000; and at the outset of the French

revolutionary war the capital had risen to £240,000,000; the interest to £9,430,000.[1] The gloomiest anticipations had been freely formed at each successive addition to the amount of the debt. "The vast load of debt under which the nation still groans," wrote the "Craftsman" in 1736, when the debt was about £50,000,000, "is the source of all those calamities and gloomy prospects of which we have so much reason to complain. To this has been owing that multiplicity of burthensome taxes which have more than doubled the price of the common necessaries of life within a few years past, and thereby distressed the poor labourer and manufacturer, disabled the farmer to pay his rent, and put even gentlemen of plentiful estates under the greatest difficulties to make a proper provision for their families." "Our parliamentary aids," wrote Bolingbroke in 1749, "from the year 1740 exclusively to the year 1748 inclusively, amount to £55,522,157, 16*s.* 3*d*, a sum that will appear incredible to future generations, and is so almost to the present. Till we have paid a good part of our debt, and restored our country in some measure to her former wealth and power, it will be difficult to maintain the dignity of Great Britain, to make her respected abroad, and secure from injuries or even affronts on the part of our neighbours." "It has been a generally received notion among political arithmeticians," wrote Mr. Hannay in 1756, "that we may increase our debt to £100,000,000, but they acknowledge that it must then cease by the debtor becoming bankrupt." "The ruinous effects of the debt," wrote Hume in 1778, "are now become apparent, and threaten the very existence of the nation"[2]

The anticipations, which were thus freely hazarded of the consequences which would result from the vast debt under which the country was labouring, were signally falsified. The debt grew: but the wealth of the country grew much more rapidly. In 1806 the country raised by taxation a larger sum than that which Bolingbroke had declared would appear incredible to future generations as an eight years' yield. But

[1] Return, National Debt, Session 1858, No. 443.

[2] See all these quotations in Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 482.

even this sum was soon surpassed. In 1815 the country raised more than £74,000,000 by taxation alone. The expenditure of the twenty-four years ending January 5, 1816, exceeded £1,500,000,000, or averaged more than sixty millions a year, and no less than £1,280,000,000 (£832,000,000 of which were, however, applied to the reduction of debt) were borrowed in the same period.[1] This statement, however, suggestive as it is, only imperfectly indicates the real growth of the debt during the great revolutionary war. Most of the money was raised at 3 per cent; and, as the funds were frequently as low as 50, the stock created usually largely exceeded the money received by the Government. The capital of the debt rose by much more than the difference between the amount of money borrowed and the amount applied to the liquidation of old liabilities. The total capital of the debt amounted in 1815 to £861,000,000, the charge upon it, excluding the sinking fund, to £32,645,000.[2]

The interest on the National Debt did not include the whole charge thrown by it on the taxpayer. The country, while it was steadily increasing its liabilities, was pleasing itself with the delusion that it was rapidly extinguishing them. A certain addition was voluntarily made to the interest of the debt raised, and the sum so added to it was annually invested in stock, which was set apart as a sinking fund. The interest of the stock so purchased was permitted to swell this fund, which became in consequence larger and of greater importance in every succeeding year. The plan was commended to the generation, which approved it, by the support which it had received from Pitt. Pitt's immediate successors did not venture to disregard a device introduced on his high authority, and the sinking fund was accordingly maintained with the utmost confidence in its merits. Had the ordinary income of the year been sufficient to cover all the charges thrown upon it, the sinking fund might have proved as advantageous as its supporters antici-

The Sinking Fund.

[1] See all these quotations in Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 489.
[2] Return, National Debt, Sess 1858, No. 443.

pated. But, throughout the whole of the war, the revenue at the disposal of the Government was insufficient for the expenditure of the country. Large sums of money were necessarily borrowed, and the determination to preserve the sinking fund inviolate only made the nation borrow more largely than would otherwise have been necessary. Many millions were annually raised by loans, and applied to the redemption of the debt. The country borrowed money from one set of creditors and paid it to another, and gained nothing by the process save a sop to its vanity.

The vanity of the public was indeed flattered beyond measure by the expedient. The sinking fund, which was in reality reducing no more debt than its existence compelled the ministry to create, seemed on paper to be as powerful as its originators had intended it to be. At the close of the war it amounted to more than £14,000,000 annually; and it seemed mathematically demonstrable that a sinking fund of £14,000,000, accruing at compound interest, would pay off the entire debt in less than half a century. Unfortunately, however, all these calculations depended on the assumption that the revenue at the disposal of the Government would be sufficient to defray the whole cost of the public service, of the charge on the debt, and of the sinking fund itself Unfortunately, too, every addition to the cost of government, every reduction of taxation, every decrease of revenue, were liable to falsify them. The scheme, in fact, depended on the surplus income of the country being equal to the whole amount of the sinking fund, and, as the result proved, it rarely exceeded one-tenth of it. The plan, in a heavily taxed country, with constituencies clamouring for fiscal relief, was certain to fail. It required its failure to prove that the only way of reducing debt is to apply an unexpended surplus to its redemption.

Revenue.

The war, which had burdened the country with a formidable debt, had, of course, necessitated a resort to heavy taxation. In 1792, when the United Kingdom was still at peace, the entire expenditure of the nation had not

reached £20,000,000.[1] During the three last years of the great war the expenditure averaged upwards of £100,000,000 a year. In 1816 the interest and sinking fund of the debt alone absorbed more than £46,000,000. Though then the restoration of peace made reductions of expenditure possible, it was clear to all parties that heavy taxation would still be necessary. The people had been taxed severely during the preceding twenty-four years to support the war. But the burdens, which the war had occasioned, were to necessitate taxation almost equally severe being levied upon their descendants.

There is, perhaps, nothing more marvellous in the history of the world than the growth of the revenue of the United Kingdom. A little more than one hundred years before the French Revolution commenced, the United Kingdom could hardly be said to have had a revenue The king, indeed, enjoyed an enormous property. As lord paramount, he was entitled to various lucrative and inconvenient feudal incidents; and the forfeiture of estates, either for treason or felony, was perpetually tending to increase the income at his disposal. With ordinary prudence and care the kings of England might easily have carried on the government of the country without asking for additional assistance from their subjects. Happily, however, for the future of this country, the kings of England did not possess ordinary prudence, or exercise ordinary care. They squandered their vast estates on their ministers or their favourites, and were compelled in consequence to apply to Parliament for assistance to enable them to conduct the government. Had they been less extravagant, they might have dispensed with a legislature: the Petition of Right, in that case, might never have been drawn up; the Grand Remonstrance might never have been framed; and England even now might not have gained the full blessings of a free and constitutional monarchy. England in this way may be said to owe more to her bad kings than her good ones. The good monarchs reconciled their subjects to

[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p 482.

arbitrary rule, the bad ones induced them to establish their liberties.

It required, however, a long series of lessons before the people of England learned that the only guarantee for the constitutional rule of a sovereign lay in the retention of the power of the purse by the people; and that, so long as the revenues were granted absolutely to a king, the king would be free to govern in his own way. The worst evils of the old financial system were reproduced on the restoration of Charles II., and some of them were, in fact, intensified by the Parliament of the day. A Parliament of landlords was naturally anxious to relieve the land of the country from the burden of feudal incidents, and Charles II. offered to abandon the emoluments of signiory for £100 000 a year. The feudal incidents had constituted a landlord's burden, and justice therefore required that the compensating impost should be raised by a direct tax on land. Unfortunately, however, the Parliament had before it the example of an excise. The excise had originally been introduced in Holland, where no article was either too insignificant or too costly to escape the impost of the exciseman. Half seriously, half in jest, it was stated that in that country the dish of fish and its sauce paid the duty thirty times before it was sent up to the table. It was certain that a tax, so universal in its application and so productive in its results, would be ultimately extended to other countries, and both Royalists and Parliamentarians had, as a matter of fact, recourse to it during the Civil War. Both parties, indeed, were loud in their declarations that the tax should be terminated at the close of the war. All unpopular taxes, when first proposed, are usually obtained under a similar promise. The promise, when the nation is accustomed to the burden, is forgotten: the usefulness of the tax alone is remembered. So was it with the excise. At the Restoration the landlords desired to escape from some disagreeable burdens. The king was ready to relieve them if he were only compensated. Justice required that the compensation should be found in a tax on land. Interest suggested the

The Excise.

expediency of shifting the burden on to the consumer. By a narrow majority of only two votes the latter alternative was preferred, and a moiety of the excise was settled on the crown. The bargain, however unjust to the people, proved profitable to the king. The moiety of the excise increased rapidly in value, till, at the close of Charles II's reign, it yielded three times the sum for which the king had originally offered to surrender his claim to the feudal incidents.

In the days of the Stuarts, the excise formed the most important branch of the king's revenue. The customs duties were, however, far more ancient, and hardly less profitable. Some authorities have derived the name from the antiquity of the tax—the "custom," or use, which formally gave it to the king.[1] The *custuma antiqua et magna* comprised the export duties on the three staple commodities of the kingdom, wool, skins, and leather. The *custuma parva et nova*, or tunnage and poundage, as they were commonly called, duties on every tun of wine imported or every pound of merchandise exported, were originally imposed on aliens only, though they were subsequently exacted also from British citizens. The lesser customs could only be levied with the consent of Parliament; the greater customs were the inherent right of the crown. When Edward I. promised to take no customs from merchants without the consent of the realm, he added the significant words, "saving to us and our heirs the customs on wool, skins, and leather, formerly granted to us by the commonalty aforesaid." But after the Restoration, when the rates of the great customs had been increased, the whole of the customs duties were placed on a common footing, and were all of them included in the permanent revenue of the crown. The Customs.

The customs were farmed by John for £2000 a year. In the reign of his successor they amounted to £6000. But the amount was said to be injurious to trade. In 1590 Elizabeth raised the farm, which was then held by Sir Thomas Smith,

[1] The derivation is so given in Johnson's *Dict.*, the old Norman French *coustume* being cited as the immediate root of the word.

from £14,000[1] to £50,000 a year. The yield of the duties rose rapidly afterwards. On James I's accession it amounted to £127,000; and, at the close of his reign, it had reached £190,000.[2] It is stated, though probably incorrectly, that, at the outbreak of the Civil War, it had been increased to £500,000. It was estimated at the period of the Revolution at £577,000 a year. At the time of the Revolution the entire revenue of the State only slightly exceeded £1,600,000 a year. The customs and the excise together contributed very nearly £1,200,000 of this amount. The only other branches of importance were the hearth money and the Post Office. The former produced £200,000; the latter about £55,000 a year.[3] Hearth money was a very ancient but a very unpopular tax. It is mentioned in Domesday Book under the name of fumage or fuage, and consequently must have existed before the Conquest. It had, however, long fallen into disuse, when it was revived after the restoration of Charles II. It was a tax of 2*s.* on each hearth on all houses paying to church and poor, and was of course very burdensome to the poorer householders. It was abolished, at William III.'s own instance, immediately after the Revolution.[4]

Other Branches of the Revenue.

Such is a brief review of the revenue of this country at the period at which it may first be said to have had a revenue. Almost the first act of the Convention Parliament, after the Revolution of 1688, was to consider whether the revenue had devolved on William and Mary. No one, as Macaulay has pointed out, doubted that

The Revenue not settled in 1689.

[1] The amount is given by Philips as £13,000, and by Camden as £14,000. Naunton simply says that the amount was doubled; and Sinclair, from whom these references are taken, conceives that the £14,000 of Camden is a mistake in the translation, and that £24,000 ought to have been written. Vide *Hist. of Revenue*, 3rd ed. vol. i. p 207, note.

[2] *Hist. of Revenue*, vol. i. pp. 100, 104, 235, 324, 326. M'Culloch, ad verb. Customs. M'Culloch on *Taxation*, p. 227. Hume's *Hist. of England*, vol. v. p. 474.

[3] These figures are taken from *Commons Journals*, 1688, pp. 37, 38. They are given differently in the return of 1869, where the temporary and expired revenue is included.

[4] Sinclair's *Hist. of Revenue*, p 41.

the lands and hereditaments of the crown had passed with the crown to the new sovereigns.[1] But the income, derivable from the lands and hereditaments of the crown, was inconsiderable in comparison with that which was drawn from the customs and excise. William himself was pardonably anxious to obtain uncontrolled possession of the whole of this revenue. Holt, who almost immediately afterwards was made chief justice of the King's Bench; Pollexfen, who, after serving for a few weeks as attorney-general, was made chief justice of the Court of Common Pleas; Treby, who succeeded Pollexfen as attorney-general—all took the king's side. "They maintained that the revenue was subjected to the same regulations as private property, that, having been granted to James for the purposes of government during his life, it could not be alienated from that purpose, or follow him after he had deserted his public trust; but that, while he lived, it belonged to the person substituted in his official state."[2] Fortunately for the country, a greater man than any of these three saw through the legal technicalities in which they were assiduously wrapping up the subject. Somers, who had already become "the life, the soul, the spirit" of the Whig party, argued that the word "life," in the Act by which the revenue had been settled, must in this instance be interpreted as synonymous with "reign;" that it was absurd to maintain that the revenue was to be exacted because James "was naturally alive," but that it was to be paid to his successors "because he was politically defunct." The Commons, convinced by Somers' arguments, adopted his position as their own. They decided, without dividing, that "the revenue had expired." But they did not proceed, as William probably anticipated, and certainly hoped, to resettle the revenue. "A long and painful experience" had convinced them that all the evils, which the country had endured during the last two reigns, had arisen from the imprudent haste with which the Commons had settled

[1] Macaulay's Works, vol. ii p 133.

[2] Somerville, *Political Transactions*, pp. 267, 268. Campbell's *Lives of Chief Justices*, vol. ii. p 133.

a revenue on the crown, and which had enabled the king to dispense with the aid of a Parliament. The Whigs, on their part, were determined that this opportunity should never be placed in the hands of another sovereign. And at the risk of incurring the king's displeasure, with the possibility of provoking his abdication, they persisted in their determination. That determination constitutes by far the most important event in the financial history of this country. It probably did even more than either Magna Charta or the Declaration of Rights, to secure the liberties of the English nation.

In the 160 years which succeeded this debate, four men of first-rate financial genius at different periods administered the finances of the kingdom. It was the object of Charles Montague to establish the tottering credit of the nation; to organise the debt; to reform the currency; and to insure an audit. It was the object of Walpole to develop the trade of the kingdom, and to free it from every hindrance; while, at the same time, the pressure of taxation was concealed from the taxpayer. With these views he strove to develop the excise, and to institute the warehousing system. It was the object of Pitt—till his intentions were frustrated by war—to obtain financial concessions from foreign Governments in return for concessions of our own. With this view he negotiated the famous commercial treaty with France. It was the object of Peel to free trade from every shackle, and to raise the money required for the purposes of the State in the simplest and most direct manner. The reform of the tariff, the repeal of the corn-laws, and the revival of the income-tax, were the salient features of this policy. Walpole's financial policy may be said to have been founded on free trade and indirect taxation. Pitt's upon reciprocity and indirect taxation. Peel's on free trade and direct taxation.

The subsequent growth of the Revenue.

During the same period, the revenue, which the nation in 1690 took into its own custody, had increased with marvellous and unexpected rapidity. At the date of the Revolution, the revenue, including the hearth money, amounted to only £1,600,000. At the close of the

reign of William III. the national income, without the hearth money, exceeded £4,869,000.[1] In the interval, indeed, a tax of 4*s.* in the pound had been laid upon all lands, tenements, and other hereditaments, and on the profits of some offices; while a poll-tax, graduated according to the station of the tax-payer, and various other duties, had also been imposed. But the revenue had not merely increased from the addition of fresh duties. The old branches had concurrently been developed. The advantages of settled government, and of an improved trade, were promoting the prosperity of the kingdom; and the customs and the excise, in the place of only £577,000 and £610,000, were yielding substantial revenues of £1,469,000 and £1,396,000. Notwithstanding the repeal of the poll-tax, the revenue still continued to be maintained, and, in the years immediately preceding 1706, it regularly exceeded £5,200,000 a year.[2]

The union with Scotland did not add materially to the financial resources of the kingdom. Scotland was a barren country, with little agriculture and little trade, and its gross income hardly exceeded £100,000 a year.[3] The union did not add 2½ per cent. to the national revenues, but the resources still continued to grow. The net income of the country amounted in 1720 to £6,323,000. The eighteen succeeding years of Walpole's administration, during which the country uniformly enjoyed the blessings of peace, were, in a financial sense, the most prosperous which had ever been known. In 1738, before Walpole had been driven by the violence of party into the Spanish war, the net income of the country had been reduced to less than £5,716,000, the expenditure to £4,724,000. Even when the Spanish war

[1] Parl. Return, Sess. 1869, No. 566, part i. p. 26.

[2] See the Parl. Return already quoted, part i. pp. 32–34. The *gross* revenues which are given in the Appendix, part ii. p. 357, averaged nearly £5,800,000. The balances are deducted from all these amounts.

[3] Scotland, by the terms of the union, was subjected to the same customs and excise duties as England; it agreed to raise £48,000 of land tax for every £1,997,000 raised in England. England, on her part, agreed that certain stamp duties and other taxes should not be extended to Scotland. Ibid. part ii. pp 356, 357.

broke out, the revenue was not raised, during Walpole's administration, to more than £6,415,000; the expenditure never reached £7,400,000.[1]

While Walpole continued in office, the cost of the Spanish war was partly defrayed by fresh taxation. The land tax, which, at the commencement of the war, stood at only 2*s.*, was raised at once to the maximum of 4*s.* in the pound. But, after Walpole was driven from office, no material additions were made to the revenue. The war was sustained on borrowed money, and fresh sums were annually added to the amount and the burden of the debt. The revenue, after the conclusion of the war, amounted to less than £7,500,000, the expenditure of the country exceeded £7,000,000. Unfortunately, the country only remained at peace for a brief interval of eight years. War again broke out in 1756. The Seven Years' War, concluded in 1763, may be said to have permanently raised the income of the country to £10,000,000, and the expenditure to £9,500,000. After another short interval of peace, the American War ensued. The national income and expenditure were raised in consequence to more than £16,000,000, the charge of the debt to more than £9,000,000. During the twenty years of Sir Robert Walpole's rule, the expenditure had only been raised by about £1,400,000. The forty years which succeeded his fall added £9,000,000 to the normal expenditure of the country.

No material alteration in the financial position of the country was made during the succeeding ten years. Its entire expenditure during 1791–2 (the last complete year of peace) amounted to rather less than £17,000,000; and considerably more than one half of this sum, or £9,310,000, represented the charge of the National Debt.[2] War ensued. Prodigious

[1] Parl. Return, Sess. 1869, No. 566, part 1. pp 430, 431

[2] The income of the country was in the main derived from four great branches. The excise, the most productive of the four, produced £8,740,000, the customs yielded £4,100,000; various stamps returned £1,460,000; and the land and assessed taxes supplied a revenue of £3,020,000. The country, therefore, from these great branches of the revenue alone, had an ample revenue of £17,300,000.

and unprecedented exertions necessitated prodigious and unprecedented expenditure. Taxation was increased; the debt was augmented with a rapidity which would have startled previous generations. The expenditure of Great Britain in 1801 amounted to £51,000,000. The charge of the debt alone absorbed £16,750,000, and more than £31,500,000 were raised by taxation. The nation was becoming gradually reconciled to burdens which would have been deemed intolerable only a few years before.

The union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801 did not produce an immediate fusion of the British and Irish exchequers. The two countries were permitted to retain separate financial systems, and to raise their respective revenues in their own way. It was arranged that each of them should bear the burden of its own debt, and that Great Britain should contribute fifteen parts and Ireland two parts of the sum required for the joint expenditure of the United Kingdom. Parliament, however, was to be free, under any circumstances, to alter these proportions after the lapse of twenty years; and if, in the interval, the debts of the two countries ever stood to each other in the proportion of their respective expenditures, it was to be at liberty to complete the union forthwith by the amalgamation of the exchequers and the indiscriminate taxation of each nation.[1] In the fourteen years which succeeded the expenditure of both countries rose with frightful rapidity. The expenditure of Great Britain increased from £51,000,000 in 1800 to £91,000,000 in 1815. The expenditure of Ireland rose from £6,500,000 in 1800 to nearly £15,000,000 in 1815. The gross produce of taxation in Great Britain increased from £31,500,000 in 1800 to £78,600,000 in 1815. The gross produce of taxation in Ireland increased in the same period from £3,000 000 to £6,600,000. The charge of the English debt rose from £16,750,000 to £28,426,000, the charge of the Irish debt from £1,000,000 to £3,850,000. The period had already

Irish Revenue.

[1] *Ret.*, Pub. Inc. and Exp., 1869, part II. p. 385. At the time of the Union the debt of Great Britain stood to the Irish debt about as 14 stands to 1.

arrived which had been foreseen in the union. The Irish debt constituted more than two-seventeenths of the entire liabilities of the United Kingdom.[1]

Currency.

The greatest exertions had necessarily been made to meet the enormous charges which the war had occasioned. The customs duties had been increased; the stamp duties had been raised; additions had been made to the excise; and a new tax of ten per cent. on income had been instituted. These additions to the taxation of the State materially augmented the resources at the disposal of the Government, but, at the same time, they proved exceptionally burdensome to the taxpayer. The country groaned under imposts, to which nothing but the continuance of the war

[1] The consolidation of the Exchequers was proposed in May 1816, and took effect from the 5th January 1817. *Hansard*, vol xxxiii. p 811 In the former of these years the debt of Ireland appears in Parliamentary documents as rather less than £29,000,000. The debt of Great Britain exceeded at the same time £817,000,000. *Ret*, Pub. Inc. and Exp., 1869, part ii. 306 The British debt was, in other words, apparently twenty-eight times as large as the Irish debt. But these figures give the proportions of debt raised in the two countries, and not the proportions for which they were respectively liable. The great mass of the money which Ireland had been compelled to borrow had been raised in London; and the greater portion of the debt which the Irish had incurred was classed as British debt. In 1811, when the whole debt of the United Kingdom amounted to £678,000,000, the Committee of Accounts reported that the Irish portion of it was as nearly as possible two-seventeenths of the whole. The contingency had thus occurred which had been foreseen by Pitt; and the period had arrived for the consummation of the Union by the consolidation of the British and Irish Exchequers. It was the opinion of the best informed politicians of those days that, if Perceval had lived, the two Exchequers would have been consolidated in 1812. Perceval, however, died. On his death the subject dropped into abeyance, and was not actively reopened till 1815. The Irish funded debt then amounted to £127,865,000, or excluding that portion in the hands of the National Debt Commissioners, to £105,000,000. Including the unfunded debt, the Irish debt was found to stand to the debt of Great Britain as 2 stands to 13. *Hansard*, vol xxxiv. p. 592, cf. v. vol. xxxiii. p. 811. The Union of the Exchequers, which consequently took place, had the effect of relieving Ireland from considerable financial difficulty. It, in fact, saved her from virtual bankruptcy. Whether the difficulties, in which she had been involved in the preceding years, and which had led to the rapid accumulation of her debt, were not due to the unfairness of the burdens imposed on her at the Union, is a question on which Irish writers have a good deal to say, but which need not be discussed here. See on this point, *inter alia*, *Two Centuries of Irish History*, p. 255.

would have reconciled it, and longed for peace as the season at which some alleviation from the burdens of the war could be anticipated. Additional taxation, however, was not the only burden which the war had occasioned. The income-tax swept one-tenth part of every man's income into the coffers of the State, but another measure, of much more consequence than the income-tax, reduced almost indefinitely the purchasing value of the residue. If a man enjoyed an income of £1000 a year, he knew that he was bound to contribute £100 to the State, but the £1000 was, in itself, a totally different thing from the £1000 which he had enjoyed when the war commenced. The purchasing value of each pound was less than it had been formerly, because the pound represented no longer a piece of money of known, recognised, and comparatively immutable value, but a piece of paper, issued on the credit of the Bank of England, inconvertible into gold, and varying in value with every ebb and flow in the tide of war, with every storm that threatened a bad harvest, or every sunny day that promised a good one.

The Bank of England, the most important establishment not merely in England but in the world, owes its foundation to the ingenuity of a Mr. William Paterson, and to the serious want of William III.'s Government for money. Paterson lent the Government £1,200,000, and, in return for the loan, obtained a charter incorporating the Governor and Society of the Bank of England. The charter was renewed on various occasions. The debt of the Government to the Bank was simultaneously increased, and at the commencement of the revolutionary war the capital of the Bank amounted to £11,642,000, while the debt due to it by the Government amounted to £11,686,000. In the meanwhile the Bank had received some privileges, and had passed through many vicissitudes. In 1708 Parliament restrained every other body, consisting of six or a greater number of persons, from borrowing, owing, or taking up any sum or sums of money on their bills or notes payable on demand, or in any less time than six months from the borrowing thereof. The Act effectually

The Bank of England.

prevented the competition of any company comprising more than six partners. If, however, the Bank of England enjoyed great privileges, it was occasionally exposed to serious difficulties. In 1696, while Montague and Newton were busily engaged with the reform of the currency, the Bank of England was compelled to suspend payment of its notes! In 1745, while the Pretender was advancing on London, the Bank, in order to gain time, was obliged to pay in shillings and sixpences! In 1793 a severe run on many private banks occasioned a prolonged drain for bullion on the Bank of England; and in 1797, the demand for specie abroad, the fear of invasion, the failure of many provincial banks, and the panic which in consequence prevailed, compelled the Government to prohibit the directors of the Bank from paying their notes in cash, and induced Parliament to continue the restriction till six months after the signature of a definitive treaty of peace.[1]

The suspension of cash payments, which was thus sanctioned in 1797, and which was continued for more than twenty years, constituted one of the most important events in the financial history of England. Its immediate results were not, however, striking. The Bank of England did not find it necessary to increase its issues very materially. Its credit was unshaken; and the public readily consented to take its paper, and to regard it as of at least equal value with gold. A large issue of notes was made for the first time in 1800. Nearly £17,000,000 were in circulation, and the paper of the Bank fell to a discount of 8 per cent. Peace, however, ensued; the Bank slightly contracted its issues; and the notes recovered their former value. The renewal of the war in 1803 necessitated increased issues by the Bank. The circulation steadily increased, and the value of the paper simultaneously declined. In 1810, when the famous Bullion Committee was appointed, some £25,000,000 of paper was in circulation, and every £100 of paper was only worth £86, 10*s.* in gold.

The depreciation of the bank paper affected different people in very different ways. A hundred pounds of paper being

[1] M'Culloch, ad verb Bank of England, for this section of the work.

only worth £86, 10*s*, would obviously only purchase as much as £86, 10*s*. in gold. As a matter of fact it seems to be admitted that the purchasing value of the paper fell rather more rapidly than its value compared with gold. The price of gold rose more than the price of all other commodities. The merchant, it is thought, concluded that, when paper had already fallen in value, it might fall still further; and, in taking it for the commodity in which he dealt, discounted the possibility of its further depreciation. Whether this be so or not, it is certain that the rise in the value of other articles (corn, for example) was far more marked than the fall in the value of bank paper. The landed classes experienced no inconvenience from this state of things. Corn having risen in value in a greater ratio than paper had fallen, a greater number of persons were tempted to grow corn. All these persons required land. An increased demand for farms ensued, and the rent of land rose. Thus the landowners, as a class, not merely did not lose, but gained largely, from the effects of the paper currency. If, indeed, as was frequently the case, the landlord's estate was mortgaged, the gain was even more marked. The interest on his mortgage was paid in a depreciated currency; but the effect of the depreciation in the currency was to raise his rent. His creditors suffered while he gained from the change. The gain which the landowner enjoyed was partly shared by the manufacturing and the trading classes. They paid the foreigner more for the goods, which they bought of him, but they charged their customers much more for the commodities which they sold to them. Like the landowners, they experienced no inconvenience from the depreciation of the currency. But the comparatively few people, who lived on fixed incomes, and the great mass of the nation, who were dependent on daily labour, were in a very different position. The wages of labour did not rise with the fall in the value of the currency, and therefore every labourer was worse off than before the war. The annuitant with a thousand a year had to pay £100 in income-tax, and his

remaining £900 was practically only worth £750. The labourer with nine shillings a week had his wages, to all intents and purposes, reduced to seven shillings and sixpence.

Landowners and manufacturers, however, paid comparatively little attention to the sufferings of annuitants or day labourers. Rents had never been so high, profits had never been so large, as during the continuance of the war. The manufacturing industries of the country had never previously experienced so marvellous a development. The hum of the workshop was heard in places which had previously only been disturbed by the whirr of the grouse; and new forces, undreamed of a century before, were employed to assist the progress of production. The trade of the United Kingdom acquired an importance which it had never previously enjoyed, and the manufacturing classes obtained an influence which they had never before known. A new England was supplanting the old country; and agriculture, the sole business of our forefathers,[1] was gradually becoming of less importance than trade.

Trade

The growth of trade was attributable to many causes. The predominance of the British at sea had driven every enemy from the ocean, and had enabled British merchants to ply their trade in comparative safety. The numerous possessions, which the British had acquired in every quarter of the globe, had provided them with customers in all parts of the world; and the most civilised, as well as the most savage, nations were purchasing the produce of the looms of Manchester and

[1] In 1793, the first year of the war, the official value of all the imports into Britain was less than £20,000,000 In 1815, the year of Waterloo, it exceeded £31,000,000. In 1792, the official value of British and Irish exports was only £18,000,000; it rose in 1815 to £41,000,000 The official values, however, give only a very imperfect idea of the value of our export trade. They are based on prices fixed so far back as 1696, and afford, therefore, an inaccurate test of the value of our trade. No attempt was made to ascertain the declared or real value of the exports till the year 1798, when it slightly exceeded £33,000,000. The declared value of the exports of British and Irish produce in 1815 exceeded £49,000,000 —M'Culloch's *Commercial Dictionary*, imports and exports, cf., however, Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 357, where the figures are slightly different Nothing is more difficult than to ascertain the correct figures.

of the factories of Birmingham. Even the taxation which war had necessitated had stimulated traders to fresh exertions. The merchants were continually discovering fresh outlets for British trade; the manufacturers were constantly encouraged to increase their produce.

Wool was the most ancient and most important of English manufactures. Custom seemed to point to the permanent superiority of the woollen trade. The Chancellor of England sat on a sack of wool; and, when men spoke of the staple trade, they referred to the trade in wool. For centuries, British sovereigns and British statesmen had, after their own fashion, and according to their own ideas, actively promoted this particular industry. Edward III. had induced Flemish weavers to settle in this country. The Restoration Parliament had prohibited the exportation of British wool, and had ordered that the dead should be interred in woollen shrouds. The manufacturers spread over the entire kingdom. Wherever there was a running stream to turn their mill, there was at any rate the possibility of a woollen factory. Norwich, with its contiguous village of Worstead, was the chief seat of the trade. But York and Bradford, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, Manchester and Kendal, were largely dependent on it. The Woollen Trade.

The steps, which Parliament took to promote this particular industry, were not always wise; in one point they were not just. Ireland, in many respects, could have competed on advantageous terms with the woollen manufacturers of England. English jealousy prohibited in consequence the importation of Irish manufactured woollen goods. The result hardly answered the sanguine anticipations of the selfish senators who secured it. The Irish, instead of sending their fleeces to be worked up in Great Britain, smuggled them, in return for contraband spirits, to France. England failed to obtain any large addition to her raw material; and Ireland was driven into closer communication with the hereditary foe of England. The loss of the Irish fleeces was the more serious from another cause. The home supply of wool

had originally been abundant and good; but its production, at the commencement of the century, was not increasing rapidly, and its quality was deteriorating. The same sheep do not produce both wool and mutton in the greatest perfection. Every improvement in their meat is effected at the cost of their fleece. English mutton was better than it had ever been; but English manufacturers were compelled to mix foreign with native wool. Had trade been free this result would have been of little moment. The English could have easily obtained an ample supply of raw material from the hills of Spain and other countries. But, at the time at which foreign wool became indispensable, the necessities of the country, or the ignorance of her financiers, led to the imposition of a heavy import duty on wool. Addington, in 1802, levied a duty upon it of 5*s.* 3*d.* the cwt.; Vansittart, in 1813, raised the tax to 6*s.* 8*d.* Thus protection had already done much to ruin the wool trade. But the evil already done was small in comparison with that in store.

Notwithstanding the restrictions on the wool trade, the woollen industry was of great importance. In 1800, Law, as counsel to the manufacturers, declared, in an address to the House of Lords, that 600,000 packs of wool, worth £6,600,000, were produced annually in England and Wales, and that 1,500,000 persons were employed in the manufacture. But these figures, as M'Culloch has shown, are undoubtedly great exaggerations Rather more than 400,000 packs of wool were available for manufacturing purposes at the commencement of the century; more than nine-tenths of these were produced at home; and some 350,000 or 400,000 persons were probably employed in the trade.[1] The great woollen industry still deserved the name of our staple trade; but it did not merit the exaggerated descriptions occasionally applied to it.

If the staple trade of the country had originally been in woollen goods, at the commencement of the present century

[1] M'Culloch, ad verb. Wool. Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, pp. 170–175.

cotton was rapidly gaining upon wool. Cotton had been used in the extreme East and in the extreme West from the earliest periods of which we have any record. Cotton. The Spaniards, on their discovery of America, found the Mexicans clothed in cotton. "There are trees," Herodotus had written, nearly 2000 years before, "which grow wild there (in India), the fruit whereof is a wool exceeding in beauty and goodness that of sheep. The natives make their clothes of this tree wool."[1] But, though cotton had been known from the earliest ages both in India and America, no cotton goods were imported into Europe; and in the mediæval world both rich and poor were clothed in silk, linen, or wool. The Moors introduced cotton into Spain. Many centuries afterwards cotton was imported into Italy, Saxony, and the Low Countries. Isolated from the rest of Europe, with little wealth, little industry, and no roads; rent by civil commotions; the English were the last people in Europe to introduce the manufacture of cotton goods into their own homes.

Towards the close of the sixteenth century, indeed, cotton goods were occasionally mentioned in the Statute Book, and the manufacture of the cottons of Manchester was regulated by Acts passed in the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI, and Elizabeth. But there seem to be good reasons for concluding that Manchester cottons, in the time of the Tudors, were woollen goods. More than a century afterwards the woollen manufacturers complained that people were dressing their children in printed cottons; and Parliament was persuaded to prohibit the introduction of Indian printed calicoes. Even an Act of Parliament, however, was unable to extinguish the growing taste for Indian cottons. The ladies, according to the complaint of an old writer, expected "to do what they

[1] *Herodotus*, Book iii. c. 106 I have quoted in the text Canon Rawlinson's version. Virgil uses much the same expression of silk—

"Velleraque ut foliis depectant tenuia Seres."—*Georg.* ii. 121.

A line which Dryden renders—

"The Seres spin
Their fleecy forests in a slender twine"

The German name for cotton is Baumwolle—tree wool.

please, to say what they please, and wear what they please." The taste for cotton led to the introduction of calico-printing in London; and Parliament, in order to encourage a new trade, was induced to sanction the importation of plain cotton cloths from India under a duty. The demand, which was thus created for calicoes, probably promoted their manufacture at home; and Manchester, Bolton, Frome, and other places, gradually acquired fresh vitality from the creation of a new industry.

Many years, however, passed before the trade attained anything but the slenderest proportions. In the year 1697 only 1,976,359 lbs. of cotton wool were imported into the United Kingdom. In the year 1751 only 2,976,610 lbs. were imported. The official value of cotton goods exported amounted in the former year to only £5915; in the latter year to only £45,986. At the present time Britain annually purchases about 1,500,000,000 lbs. of cotton wool. She annually disposes of cotton goods worth £60,000,000.[1] The import trade is 500 times as large as it was in 1751; the value of the exports has been increased 1300 fold. The world has never seen, in any similar period, so prodigious a growth of manufacturing industry. But the trade has not merely grown from an infant into a giant; its conditions have been concurrently altered. Up to the middle of the last century, cotton goods were really never made at all. The so-called cotton manufactures were a combination of wool or linen and cotton. No Englishman had been able to produce a cotton thread strong enough for the warp; and even the cotton manufacturers themselves appear to have despaired of doing so. They induced Parliament in 1736 to repeal the prohibition, which still encumbered the Statute Book, against wearing printed calicoes; but the repeal was granted on the curious condition "that the warp thereof be entirely linen yarn." Parliament no doubt intended by this provision to check the importation of Indian goods without interfering with the home

[1] I have retained, in this place and other passages, the figures in my original edition.

manufacturers. The superior skill of the Indians enabled them to use cotton for a warp; while clumsy workmanship made the use of cotton as a warp unattainable at home.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, then, a piece of cotton cloth, in the true sense of the term, had never been made in England. The so-called cotton goods were all made in the cottages of the weavers. The yarn was carded by hand; spun by hand; worked into cloth by a hand-loom. The weaver was usually the head of the family; his wife and unmarried daughters spun the yarn for him. Spinning was the ordinary occupation of every girl; and the distaff, for countless centuries her ordinary instrument, was occasionally used as a synonym for woman. "Le royaume de France ne tombe point en *quenouille*."

> See my royal master murdered,
> His crown usurped, a *distaff* in the throne.

To this day every unmarried girl is commonly described as a "spinster."

The operation of weaving was, however, much more rapid than that of spinning The weaver consumed more weft than his own family could supply him with, and experienced the greatest difficulty in obtaining sufficient yarn. About the middle of the eighteenth century the ingenuity of two persons, a father and a son, made this difference more apparent. The shuttle had originally been thrown by the hand from one end of the loom to the other. John Kay, a native of Bury, by his invention of the fly-shuttle, saved the weaver from this labour. The lathe, in which the shuttle runs, was lengthened at both ends; two strings were attached to its opposite ends; the strings were held by a peg in the weaver's hands, and, by plucking the peg, the weaver was enabled to give the necessary impulse to the shuttle. Robert Kay, John Kay's son, added the drop-box, by means of which the weaver was able "to use any one of three shuttles, each containing a different coloured weft, without the trouble of taking them from and replacing them in the lathe." By means of these inventions each weaver was easily able to perform the amount of work which had

previously required two men to do; and the spinsters found themselves more hopelessly distanced than ever in their efforts to supply the weavers with weft.

The preparation of weft was entirely accomplished by manual labour, and the process was very complicated. Carding and roving were both slowly performed with the aid of the clumsy implements which had originally been invented for the purpose. "Carding is the process to which the cotton is subjected after it has been opened and cleaned, in order that the fibres of the wool may be disentangled, straightened, and laid parallel with each other, so as to admit of being spun This was formerly effected by instruments called hand-cards, which were brushes made of short pieces of wire instead of bristles, the wires being stuck into a sheet of leather, at a certain angle, and the leather fastened on a flat piece of wood about twelve inches long and five wide, with a handle. The cotton being spread upon one of the cards, it was repeatedly combed with another till all the fibres were laid straight, when it was stripped off the card in a fleecy roll ready for the rover In "roving" the spinner took the short fleecy rolls in which the cotton was stripped off the hand-cards, applied them successively to the spindle, and whilst with one hand she turned the wheel and thus made the spindle revolve, with the other she drew out the cardings, which, receiving a slight twist from the spindle, were made into thick threads called rovings, and wound upon the spindle so as to form "cops." In spinning, "the roving was spun into yarn; the operation was similar, but the thread was drawn out much finer and received much more twist. It will be seen that this instrument only admitted of one thread being spun at a time by one pair of hands, and the slowness of the operation and consequent expensiveness of the yarn formed a great obstacle to the establishment of a new manufacture."

The trade was in this humble and primitive state when a series of extraordinary and unparalleled inventions altered the conditions on which cotton had been hitherto prepared. A little more than a century ago—so the story runs—John

Hargreaves, a poor weaver in the neighbourhood of Blackburn, was returning home from a long walk, in which he had been purchasing a further supply of yarn for his loom. As he entered his cottage, his wife Jenny accidentally upset the spindle which she was using. Hargreaves noticed that the spindle, which was now thrown into an upright position, continued to revolve, and that the thread was still spinning in his wife's hand. The idea immediately occurred to him that it would be possible to connect a considerable number of upright spindles with one wheel, and thus multiply the productive power of each spinster. "He contrived a frame in one part of which he placed eight rovings in a row, and in another part a row of eight spindles. The rovings, when extended to the spindles, passed between two horizontal bars of wood, forming a clasp which opened and shut somewhat like a parallel ruler. When pressed together this clasp held the threads fast; a certain portion of roving being extended from the spindles to the wooden clasp, the clasp was closed, and was then drawn along the horizontal frame to a considerable distance from the spindles, by which the threads were lengthened out and reduced to the proper tenuity; this was done with the spinner's left hand, and his right hand at the same time turned a wheel which caused the spindles to revolve rapidly, and thus the roving was spun into yarn By returning the clasp to its first situation and letting down a piercer wire, the yarn was wound upon the spindle"

Hargreaves succeeded in keeping his admirable invention secret for a time. But the powers of his machine soon became known. His ignorant neighbours hastily concluded that a machine, which enabled one spinster to do the work of eight, would throw multitudes of persons out of employment. A mob broke into his house and destroyed his machine. Hargreaves himself had to retire to Nottingham, where, with the friendly assistance of another person, he was able to take out a patent for the spinning-jenny, as the machine, in compliment to his industrious wife, was called.

The invention of the spinning jenny gave a new impulse to

the cotton manufacture. But the invention of the spinning-jenny, if it had been accompanied by no other improvements, would not have allowed any purely cotton goods to be manufactured in England. The yarn spun by the jenny, like that which had previously been spun by hand, was neither fine enough nor hard enough to be employed as warp, and linen or woollen threads had consequently to be used for this purpose. In the year, however, in which Hargreaves moved from Blackburn to Nottingham, Richard Arkwright took out a patent for his still more celebrated machine. It is alleged that John Wyatt of Birmingham, thirty years before the date of Arkwright's patent, had elaborated a machine for spinning by rollers. But in a work of this description it is impossible to analyse the conflicting claims of rival inventors to the credit of discovering particular machinery; and the historian can do no more than record the struggles of those whose names are associated with the improvements which he is noticing. Richard Arkwright, like John Hargreaves, was of humble origin. Hargreaves began life as a poor weaver, Arkwright as a barber's assistant. Hargreaves had a fitting partner in his industrious wife Jenny. Mrs Arkwright is said to have destroyed the models which her husband made. But Arkwright was not deterred from his pursuit by the poverty of his circumstances or the conduct of his wife. "After many years intense and painful application," he invented his memorable machine for spinning by rollers; and laid the foundations of the gigantic industry which has done more than any other trade to concentrate in this country the wealth of the world. The principle of Arkwright's great invention is very simple. He passed the thread over two pairs of rollers, one of which was made to revolve much more rapidly than the other. The thread, after passing over the pair revolving slowly, was drawn into the requisite tenuity by the rollers revolving at a higher rapidity. By this simple but memorable invention, Arkwright succeeded in producing thread capable of employment as warp. From the circumstance that the mill at which his machinery was first erected was driven by water-power, the machine received the

somewhat inappropriate name of the water-frame; the thread spun by it was usually called the water-twist.

The invention of the fly-shuttle by John Kay had enabled the weavers to consume more cotton than the spinsters had been able to provide; the invention of the spinning-jenny and the water-frame would have been useless if the old system of hand-carding had not been superseded by a more efficient and more rapid process. Just as Arkwright applied rotatory motion to spinning, so Lewis Paul introduced revolving cylinders for carding cotton. Paul's machine consisted of "a horizontal cylinder, covered in its whole circumference with parallel rows of cards with intervening spaces, and turned by a handle. Under the cylinder was a concave frame, lined internally with cards exactly fitting the lower half of the cylinder, so that, when the handle was turned, the cards of the cylinder and of the concave frame worked against each other and carded the wool." "The cardings were of course only of the length of the cylinder, but an ingenious apparatus was attached for making them into a perpetual carding Each length was placed on a flat broad riband which was extended between two short cylinders, and which wound upon one cylinder as it unwound from the other."[1]

This extraordinary series of inventions placed an almost unlimited supply of yarn at the disposal of the weaver. But the machinery, which had thus been introduced, was still incapable of providing yarn fit for the finer qualities of cotton cloth. "The water-frame spun twist for warps, but it could not be advantageously used for the finer qualities, as thread of great tenuity has not strength to bear the pull of the rollers when winding itself on the bobbin." This defect, however, was removed by the ingenuity of Samuel Crompton, a young weaver residing near Bolton. Crompton succeeded in combining in one machine the various excellences "of Arkwright's water-frame and Hargreaves' jenny." Like the former, his machine, which from its nature is happily called the mule,

[1] Baines' *Hist of the Cotton Manufacture*, p. 174, from which work the preceding quotations are also taken.

"has a system of rollers to reduce the roving; and like the latter it has spindles without bobbins to give the twist, and the thread is stretched and spun at the same time by the spindles after the rollers have ceased to give out the rove. The distinguishing feature of the mule is that the spindles, instead of being stationary, as in both the other machines, are placed on a moveable carriage, which is wheeled out to the distance of fifty-four or fifty-six inches from the roller beam, in order to stretch and twist the thread, and wheeled in again to wind it on the spindles. In the jenny, the clasp, which held the rovings, was drawn back by the hand from the spindles; in the mule, on the contrary, the spindles recede from the clasp, or from the roller beam which acts as a clasp The rollers of the mule draw out the roving much less than those of the water-frame, and they act like the clasp of the jenny by stopping and holding fast the rove, after a certain quantity has been given out, whilst the spindles continue to recede for a short distance further, so that the draught of the thread is in part made by the receding of the spindles. By this arrangement, comprising the advantages both of the roller and the spindles, the thread is stretched more gently and equably, and a much finer quality of yarn can therefore be produced"[1]

The effects of Crompton's invention may be stated concisely. Before his time it was thought impossible to spin eighty hanks of cotton to the pound. The mule has spun three hundred and fifty hanks to the pound. The natives of India could spin a pound of cotton into a thread 119 miles long The English succeeded in spinning the same thread to a length of 160 miles[2] Yarn of the finest quality, and to an almost unlimited quantity, was at the disposal of the weaver. But the great inventions, which have been thus enumerated, would not of themselves have been sufficient to establish the cotton manufacture on its present basis. The ingenuity of Hargreaves, Arkwright, and Crompton had been exercised to provide the weaver with yarn. Their inventions had provided him with

[1] Baines' *Hist of the Cotton Manufacture*, pp 197, 198.
[2] Ibid. p. 200, and *Colchester*, vol ii p 75

more yarn than he could by any possibility use. The spinster had beaten the weaver, just as the weaver had previously beaten the spinster, and the manufacture of cotton cloth seemed likely to stand still because the yarn could not be woven more rapidly than an expert workman with Kay's improved fly-shuttle could weave it.

Such a result was actually contemplated by some of the leading manufacturers, and might possibly have occurred if it had not been averted by the ingenuity of a Kentish clergyman. Edmund Cartwright happened to be staying at Matlock in the summer of 1784, and to be thrown into the company of some Manchester gentlemen. The conversation turned on Arkwright's machinery, and "one of the company observed that, as soon as Arkwright's patent expired, so many mills would be erected and so much cotton spun that hands would never be found to weave it" Cartwright replied "that Arkwright must then set his wits to work to invent a weaving mill" The Manchester gentlemen, however, unanimously agreed that the thing was impracticable Cartwright "controverted the impracticability by remarking that there had lately been exhibited an automaton figure which played at chess;" it could not be "more difficult to construct a machine that shall weave than one which shall make all the variety of moves which are required in that complicated game." Within three years he himself proved that the invention was practicable by producing the power-loom. Subsequent inventors improved the idea which Cartwright originated, and within fifty years from the date of his memorable visit to Matlock there were not less than 100,000 power-looms at work in Great Britain.[1]

The inventions, which have been thus enumerated, are the most remarkable of the improvements which stimulated the development of the cotton industry. But other inventions, less generally remembered, were hardly less wonderful or less beneficial than these Up to the middle of last century

[1] Baines' *Cotton*, pp 223, 235.

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cotton could only be bleached by the cloth being steeped in alkaline leys for several days, washed clean, and spread on the grass for some weeks to dry. The process had to be repeated several times, and many months were consumed before the tedious operation was concluded. Scheele, the Swedish philosopher, discovered in 1774 the bleaching properties of chlorine, or oxymuriatic acid. Berthollet, the French chemist, conceived in 1785 the idea of applying the acid to bleaching cloth. Watt, the inventor of the steam-engine, and Henry of Manchester, respectively introduced the new acid into the bleachfields of Macgregor of Glasgow and Ridgway of Bolton. The process of bleaching was at once reduced from months to days, or even hours.[1]

In the same year in which Watt and Henry were introducing the new acid to the bleacher, Bell, a Scotchman, was laying the foundations of a trade in printed calicoes. "The old method of printing was by blocks of sycamore, about 10 inches long by 5 broad, on the surface of which the pattern was cut in relief in the common method of wood engraving" As the block had to be applied to the cloth by hand, "no more of it could be printed at once than the block could cover, and a single piece of calico, 28 yards in length, required the application of the block 448 times"[2] This clumsy process was superseded by cylinder printing. A polished copper cylinder, several feet in length, and 3 or 4 inches in diameter, is engraved with a pattern round its whole circumference and from end to end It is then placed horizontally in a press, and, as it revolves, the lower part of the circumference passes through the colouring matter, which is again removed from the whole surface of the cylinder, except the engraved pattern, by an elastic steel blade placed in contact with the cylinder, and reduced to so fine and straight an edge as to take off the colour without scratching the copper. The colour being thus left only in the engraved pattern, the piece of calico or muslin is drawn tightly over the cylinder, which revolves in the same

[1] Baines' *Cotton*, pp 247-249. [2] Ibid pp 264, 265.

direction, and prints the cloth." The saving of labour "effected by the machine' is "immense: one of the cylinder machines, attended by a man and a boy, is actually capable of producing as much work as could be turned out by one hundred block printers, and as many tear boys"[1]

Such are the leading inventions, which made Great Britain in less than a century the wealthiest country in the world. "When we undertook the cotton manufacture we had comparatively few facilities for its prosecution, and had to struggle with the greatest difficulties. The raw material was produced at an immense distance from our shores, and in Hindustan and in China the inhabitants had arrived at such perfection in the arts of spinning and weaving, that the lightness and delicacy of their finest cloths emulated the web of the gossamer, and seemed to set competition at defiance. Such, however, has been the influence of the stupendous discoveries and inventions of Hargreaves, Arkwright, Crompton, Cartwright, and others, that we have overcome all these difficulties—that neither the extreme cheapness of labour in Hindustan, nor the excellence to which the natives had attained, has enabled them to withstand the competition of those, who buy their cotton, and who, after carrying it 5000 miles to be manufactured, carry back the goods to them."[2]

If Great Britain entirely monopolised the woollen and the cotton trades, she had done her best, in her own way, to promote the manufacture of linen in Ireland. In 1698, Parliament, while rigorously prohibiting the exportation of Irish woollen goods, sedulously attempted to encourage the linen manufacture in Ireland Bounties were paid on all linen goods imported into this country from the sister island; and the great linen trade acquired, especially in Ulster, the importance which it still retains[3] A formidable rival to Ulster was, however, slowly rising in another part of

Linen

[1] Baines' *Cotton*, pp 265, 266.

[2] M'Culloch's *Commercial Dict*, ad verb. Cotton.

[3] In 1800, 31,978,039 yards of linen were exported from Ireland to Great Britain, and 2,585,829 yards to other countries. In 1815, the export trade had risen to 37,986,359 and 5,496,206 yards respectively.

the kingdom. At the close of the great French war, Dundee was still an insignificant manufacturing town, but the foundations were already laid of the surprising supremacy which she has since acquired in the linen trade. Some 3000 tons of flax were imported into the Scotch port in 1814. But the time was rapidly coming when the shipments of linen from this single place were to exceed those from all Ireland, and Dundee was to be spoken of by professed economists as the Manchester of the linen trade.[1]

Silk

The silk manufacturers of Britain have never yet succeeded in acquiring the predominance which the woollen, cotton, and linen factors have virtually obtained. The worm, by which the raw material is produced, has never been acclimatised on a large scale in England; and the trade has naturally flourished chiefly in those countries where it could live and spin, or where the raw material could be the most easily procured. Insular prejudice, moreover, should not induce the historian to forget another reason which has materially interfered with the development of this particular trade The ingenuity of the British was superior to that of every other nation; but the taste of the British was inferior to that of most people. An article, which was only worn by the rich, and which was only used for its beauty and delicacy, was naturally produced most successfully by the most artistic people. English woollen goods found their way to every continental nation; but the wealthy English imported their finest lustrings and *à la modes* from Italy and France. The silk trade would, in fact, have hardly found a home in England at all had it not been for the folly of a neighbouring potentate. Louis XIV., in a disastrous hour for France, revoked the Edict of Nantes; and the French Huguenots, preferring their consciences to their country, sought a home amidst a more liberal people. The silk weavers of France settled in Spitalfields, and the British silk trade gained rapidly on its foreign rivals. Parliament adopted the usual clumsy contrivances to promote an industry whose importance

[1] M'Culloch, ad verb. Linen; Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 230

it was no longer possible to ignore. Prohibitory duties, designed to discourage the importation of foreign silk, were imposed by the legislature; monopolies were granted to successful throwsters, and every precaution was taken, which protection could suggest, to perpetuate the supremacy which Great Britain was gradually acquiring in the silk trade. The usual results followed this short-sighted policy. Prohibitory duties encouraged smuggling. Foreign silk found its way into England, and the revenue was defrauded. The English trade began to decline, and Parliament again interfered to promote its prosperity. In that unhappy period of English history, which succeeds the fall of Chatham and precedes the rise of Pitt, Parliament adopted fresh expedients to promote the prosperity of the silk trade Prohibitory duties were replaced with actual prohibition, and elaborate attempts were made to regulate the wages of the Spitalfields weavers The natural consequences ensued. Smuggling, which had been created by prohibitive duties, flourished with fresh vitality under the influence of actual prohibition, and the capitalists transferred their mills from Spitalfields, where the wages of their workmen were fixed by law, to Macclesfield and other places, where master and workmen were free to make their own terms.

The silk trade was hardly being developed with the same rapidity as the three other textile industries But silk, like wool, cotton, and linen, was affording a considerable amount of employment to a constantly growing population. The textile industries of this country could not indeed have acquired the importance, which they have since obtained, if the inventions which have already been described had not been supplemented by the labours of explorers in another field. Machinery makes possible what man by manual labour alone would find it impossible to perform. But machinery would be an useless incumbrance were it not for the presence of some motive power. From the earliest ages men have endeavoured to supplement the brute force of animals with the more powerful forces which nature has placed at their disposal. The ox was not to be perpetually

Steam

used to tread out the corn; women were not always to pass their days laboriously grinding at a mill. The movement of the atmosphere, the flow of running water, were to be taken into the service of man; and the invention of windmills and water-mills was to mark an advance in the onward march of civilisation. But air and water, mighty forces as they are, proved but fickle and uncertain auxiliaries. When the wind was too low its strength was insufficient to turn the cumbrous sails of the mill, when it was too high it deranged the complicated machinery of the miller. The miller who trusted to water was hardly more fortunate than the man who relied upon air. A summer drought reduced the power of his wheel at the time when long days and fine weather made him anxious to accomplish the utmost possible amount of work. A flood swept away the dam on which his mill depended for its supply of water. An admirable auxiliary during certain portions of each year, water was occasionally too strong, occasionally too weak, for the purposes of the miller.

The manufacturing industry of the country stood, therefore, in need of a new motive power; and invention, which is supposed by some thinkers to depend like other commodities on the laws of demand and supply, was busily elaborating a new problem—the use of a novel power, which was to revolutionise the world. The elasticity of hot water had long been noticed, and, for a century and a half before the period of this history, a few advanced thinkers had been speculating on the possibility of utilising the expansive powers of steam The Marquis of Worcester had described, in his "Century of Inventions," "an admirable and most forcible way to drive up water by means of fire." Steam was used early in the eighteenth century as a motive power for pumping water from mines; and Newcomen, a blacksmith in Dartmouth, invented a tolerably efficient steam-engine It was not, however, till 1769 that James Watt, a native of Greenock, and a mathematical instrument maker in Glasgow, obtained his first patent for "methods of lessening the consumption of steam, and consequently of fuel, in fire-engines." James Watt was born

in 1736. His father was a magistrate, and had the good sense to encourage the turn for mechanics which his son displayed. At the age of nineteen Watt was placed with a mathematical instrument maker in London. But a feeble health, which had interfered with his studies as a boy, prevented him from pursuing his avocations in England. Watt returned to his native country. The Glasgow body of Arts and Trades, however, refused to allow him to exercise his calling within the limits of their jurisdiction; and, had it not been for the University of Glasgow, which befriended him in his difficulty, and appointed him their mathematical instrument maker, the career of one of the greatest geniuses, whom Great Britain has produced, would have been stinted at its outset

There happened to be in the University a model of Newcomen's engine. It happened, too, that the model was defectively constructed. Watt, in the ordinary course of his business, was asked to remedy its defects, and he soon succeeded in doing so. But his examination of the model convinced him of serious faults in the original. Newcomen had injected cold water into the cylinder in order to condense the steam and thus obtain a necessary vacuum for the piston to work in. Watt discovered that three-fourths of the fuel which the engine consumed were required to reheat the cylinder. "It occurred to him that, if the condensation could be performed in a separate vessel, communicating with the cylinder, the latter could be kept hot while the former was cooled, and the vapour arising from the injected water could also be prevented from impairing the vacuum. The communication could easily be effected by a tube, and the water could be pumped out. This is the first and the grand invention by which he at once saved three-fourths of the fuel, and increased the power one-fourth, thus making every pound of coal produce five times the force formerly obtained from it."[1] But Watt was not satisfied with this single improvement. He introduced steam above as well as below the piston, and thus again

[1] Lord Brougham's *Men of Letters and Science*, p 367

increased the power of the machine. He discovered the principle of parallel motion, and thus made the piston move in a true straight line. He regulated the supply of water to the boiler by the means of "floats," the supply of steam to the cylinder by the application of "the governor;" and, by these discoveries, "satisfied himself that he had almost created a new engine, of incalculable power, universal application, and inestimable value."[1] It is unnecessary to relate in these pages the gradual introduction of the new machine to the manufacturing public. Watt was first connected with Dr. Roebuck, an ironmaster of Glasgow. But his name is permanently associated with that of Mr. Boulton, the proprietor of the Soho Works near Birmingham, whose partner he became in 1774. Watt and Boulton rapidly supplemented the original invention with further improvements Other inventors succeeded in the same field, and, by the beginning of the present century, steam was established as a new force; advanced thinkers were considering the possibility of applying it to purposes of locomotion.

Iron

The steam-engine would not have been invented in the eighteenth century, or would not at any rate have been discovered in this country, if it had not been for the mineral wealth with which Great Britain has fortunately been provided. Iron, the most useful of all metals, presents greater difficulties than any other of them to the manufacturer, and was probably one of the last minerals which was applied to the service of man. Centuries elapsed before the rich mines of our own country were even slightly worked. The Romans indeed established iron works in Gloucestershire, just as they obtained tin from Cornwall and lead from Wales. But the British did not imitate the example of their earliest conquerors, and the little iron which was used in this country was imported from abroad. Some progress was, no doubt, made in the southern counties; the smelters naturally seeking their ores in those places where wood, then the only available fuel, was

[1] Lord Brougham's *Men of Letters and Science*, p 371.

to be found in abundance. The railings, which but lately encircled our metropolitan cathedral, were cast in Sussex. But the prosperity of the trade involved its own ruin. Iron could not be made without large quantities of fuel. The wood gradually disappeared before the operations of the smelter, and the country gentlemen hesitated to sell their trees for fuel when the increase of shipping was creating a growing demand for timber. Nor were the country gentlemen animated in this respect by purely selfish motives. Parliament itself regarded the constant destruction of timber with such disfavour that it seriously contemplated the suppression of the iron trade as the only practicable remedy. "Many think," said a contemporary writer, "that there should be no works anywhere, they so devour the woods." [1] Fortunately, so crucial a remedy was not necessary. At the commencement of the seventeenth century, Dud Dudley, a natural son of Lord Dudley, had proved the feasibility of smelting iron with coal, but the prejudice and ignorance of the workpeople had prevented the adoption of his invention In the middle of the eighteenth century attention was again drawn to his process, and the possibility of substituting coal for wood was conclusively established at Darby's works in Coalbrook Dale. The impetus which was thus given to the iron trade was extraordinary. The total produce of the country amounted at the time to only 18,000 tons of iron a year, four-fifths of the iron used being imported from Sweden. In 1802 Great Britain possessed 168 blast-furnaces, and produced 170,000 tons of iron annually. In 1806 the produce had risen to 250,000 tons; it had increased in 1820 to 400,000 tons. Fifty years afterwards, or in 1870, 6,000,000 tons of iron were produced from British ores.[2]

The progress of the iron trade indicated, of course, a corresponding development of the supply of coal. Coal had

[1] Smiles' *Industrial Biography*, p 43

[2] *Pict Hist*, vol iv p 689, M'Culloch, *Dict of Commerce*, ad verb. Iron; Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 250, statistical abstrac of he United Kingdom.

been used in England for domestic purposes from very early periods. Sea coal had been brought to London; but the citizens complained that the smoke was injurious to their health, and persuaded the legislature to forbid the use of coal on sanitary grounds. The convenience of the new fuel triumphed, however, over the arguments of the sanitarians and the prohibitions of the legislature, and coal continued to be brought in constantly though slowly increasing quantities to London. Its use for smelting iron led to new contrivances for ensuring its economical production. Before the commencement of the present century there were two great difficulties which interfered with the operations of the miner. The roof of the mine had necessarily to be propped, and, as no one had thought of using wood, and coal itself was employed for the purpose, only sixty per cent of the produce of each mine was raised above ground. About the beginning of the nineteenth century, timber struts were gradually substituted for the pillars of coal, and it became consequently possible to raise from the mine all the coal won by the miner. A still more important discovery was made at the exact period at which this history commences. The coal miner in his underground calling was constantly exposed to the dangers of fire damp, and was liable to be destroyed without a moment's notice by the most fearful catastrophe. In the year in which the great French war was concluded, Sir Humphrey Davy succeeded in perfecting his safety lamp, an invention which enabled the most dangerous mines to be worked with comparative safety, and thus augmented to an extraordinary extent the available supplies of coal [1]

Coal.

Humphrey Davy was the son of a wood carver of Penzance, and early in life was apprenticed to a local apothecary. Chance—of which other men would perhaps have failed to avail themselves—gave the lad an opportunity of cultivating his taste for chemistry. A French surgeon, wrecked on

[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 277, M'Culloch, ad verb Coal.

the coast, to whom Davy had shown some kindness, gave him a case of surgical instruments, and "the means of making some approximation to an exhausting engine." Watt's son, Gregory, was ordered to winter in Cornwall for his health, and happened to take apartments in the house of Davy's mother. "Another accident threw him in the way of Mr. Davies Giddy, a cultivator of natural as well as mathematical science." Giddy "gave to Davy the use of an excellent library," he 'introduced him to Dr. Beddoes," who made his young friend the head of "a pneumatic institution for the medical use of gases,' which he was then forming. The publication, soon afterwards, of a fanciful paper on light and heat gave Davy a considerable reputation. He was successively chosen assistant lecturer in chemistry, and sole chemical professor, of the Royal Institution While he he'd this office his inquiries induced him to investigate the causes of the fearful explosions which continually took place in coal mines. He soon satisfied himself that carburetted hydrogen is the cause of fire damp, and that it will not explode unless mixed with atmospheric air "in proportions between six and fourteen times its bulk;" and "he was surprised to observe in the course of his experiments, made for ascertaining how the inflammation takes place, that the flames will not pass through tubes of a certain length and smallness of bore. He then found that, if the length be diminished and the bore also reduced, the flames will not pass; and he further found that, by multiplying the number of the tubes, this length may be safely diminished provided the bore be proportionally lessened. Hence it appeared that gauze of wire, whose meshes were only one twenty-second of an inch in diameter, stopped the flame and prevented the explosion."[1] These successive discoveries, the results of repeated experiments and careful thought, led to the invention of the safety lamp. The first safety lamp was made in the year 1815. There is some satisfaction in reflecting that the year, which was memorable

[1] See Brougham's *Men of Letters and Science*, p. 462. The life of Davy is admirably told by Lord Brougham.

for the conclusion of the longest and most destructive of modern wars, was also remarkable for one of the most beneficial discoveries which have ever been given to mankind. Even the peace of Paris did not probably save more life than Sir Humphrey Davy's invention. The gratitude of a nation properly bestowed titles and pensions, lands and houses, stars and honours, on the conqueror of Napoleon. Custom and precedent only allowed inferior rewards to the inventor of the safety lamp. Yet Hargreaves and Arkwright, Crompton and Cartwright, Watt and Davy, did more for the cause of mankind than even Wellington. Their lives had more influence on their country's future than the career of the great general. His victories secured his country peace for rather more than a generation Their inventions gave Great Britain a commercial supremacy, which neither war nor foreign competition has yet destroyed.

A series of extraordinary inventions, at the commencement of the present century, had endowed Great Britain with new manufacturing vigour Hargreaves, Arkwright, Crompton, and Cartwright had developed, to a remarkable degree, the producing power of man; Watt had given a new significance to their inventions by superseding the feeble and unequal forces, which had hitherto been used, with the most tractable and powerful of agents. And Davy, by his beneficent contrivance, had enabled coal to be won with less danger, and had relieved the miner's life from one of its most hideous perils. The ingenuity of these great men had been exercised with different objects; but the inventions of each of them had given fresh importance to the discoveries of the others The spinning-jenny, the water frame, and the mule would have been deprived of half their value if they had not been supplemented with the power-loom; the power loom would, in many places, have been useless without the steam-engine; the steam-engine would have been idle had it not been for coal; and coal could not have been won without great danger, had it not been for Sir H. Davy. Coal, then, was the commodity whose extended use was revolutionising the world; and the population of the

world, as the first consequence of the change, moved towards the coal-fields. The change was just commencing at the beginning of the present century; it was proceeding with rapid strides at the period at which this history opens; its ultimate effects will be seen later on in this work. The time was to come when the coal measures of England were to draw away the population of Ireland; to weaken the power of the southern agricultural counties, to give predominance to the north of England; and to involve a political revolution

In the earlier ages of the world population followed, as a rule, the navigable rivers. They were the great roads with which the country was intersected; they afforded the almost only available means of bringing the productions of the interior to a profitable market The navigation of the Danube involves, at the present moment, the nicest international questions. The navigation of the Mississippi nearly drove the Western States of America into alliance with the South. The produce of the gigantic empire which frowns on the eastern flank of Europe is slowly floated down its huge rivers to the uncertain and difficult outlets which it possesses in the Baltic and Black Seas. The rivers of this country were at least as advantageous to our ancestors as the Mississippi is to the Central States of America, or the Danube, the Dnieper, the Don, and the Volga are now to the Austrian and Russian empires. It will be easily understood that the value of a river for navigable purposes depends on the comparative flatness of the valley which it drains, and the proportion which its estuary bears to its entire course. A flat valley is generally productive of a quiet and deep stream; and the navigator, in the most primitive of vessels, escapes the dangers of being upset in a rapid current, or stranded on an inconvenient shallow. A long estuary benefits almost equally the outward and the homeward trade. The vessels are carried on the ebbing tide to the sea, they are borne on the flood tide towards the port to which they are bound. Population.

The rivers of Great Britain, and especially those in the south and east of England, have the double advantage of long

estuaries and of draining comparatively flat valleys. A glance at a map of England will show that the greater portion of the country is divided into three great watersheds. A large portion of the north of England is drained by the great affluents of the Humber—the Swale, the Ure, the Nidd, the Wharfe, the Aire, the Don, and the Trent. The south-east of England is watered by the Thames and the Medway. While the Wye, the Severn, the Avon, the Usk, and the Parret mix their streams in the Bristol Channel. The great rivers, which drained these three watersheds, formed originally the main roads of England, though many minor streams, the Ouse, the Yare, the Exe, the Wiltshire Avon, the Itchen, either from their volume or the excellence of their estuaries, were also available for purposes of locomotion.

As every town is necessarily dependent on a road, so towns in the olden time were usually built on the best roads which were then available, the rivers In the noblest chapter which he ever wrote, Macaulay tells us that in the days of Charles II the three chief towns of England were London, Bristol, and Norwich Next to them in importance were York, the capital of the North, and Exeter, the capital of the West. Every one of these places is situated not merely on a great river, but on a great estuary. London owed its wealth and prosperity to the Thames "Civitatis fundationis, constructionis, ædificationis, causa erat Thamesis" Bristol on the Avon had the Severn at her feet Norwich on the Yare had easy access to the sea, the great highway of the world York on the Ouse had direct communication through the Derwent, the Ure, the Wharfe, and the Don, with every corner of the county of which it was the capital, while, through the aid of the Trent, it had another road to the rich midland counties of England. Last of all, Exeter, seated on the Exe, was in close communication with the English Channel. So long as the rivers were the best, or even the only practicable, roads in England, the places, which had thus acquired the first rank in the kingdom, maintained their superiority. But in the middle of the eighteenth century a great nobleman with the aid of a great engineer,

effected the supercession of the river by the canal. The difficulty of leading a canal from one town to another arises from the difference in the levels of the adjoining country. The Chinese, who were apparently at one time the most ingenious of the human race, but whose ingenuity has become stationary under the influence of a cold and indomitable conservatism, were perhaps the first people in the world who designed a canal. The English, who, under the influence of free institutions, and with the encouragement of free trade, have obtained a supremacy in commerce which no other country has ever enjoyed, were nearly the last nation to adopt this useful expedient for the development of their resources. The first canal in England was commenced in 1755, but it was not till 1758 that the great Duke of Bridgewater commenced, with Brindley's aid, the gigantic canal from Runcorn to Manchester, which immortalised its founder's name, and ultimately changed the whole face of the country. Canals.

Francis, Duke of Bridgewater, did perhaps more to promote the prosperity of this country than all the dukes, marquises, and earls combined, who, before his time, had been born into the world. Born in 1736, the fifth and youngest son of his father, a weak and sickly child, there seemed little chance that he would ever inherit the title. By the time, however, that he had completed his twelfth year, the weak and sickly child had survived his four brothers, and had succeeded to his father's title Five years later "his guardians, finding him still alive and likely to live," sent him, in company with his tutor, Robert Wood, to travel on the continent. In the course of his travels, he is said to have been peculiarly interested in the magnificent canal of Languedoc, with which, seventy years previously, Pierre Riquet de Bonrepos had united the Atlantic and the Mediterranean [1] Returned home, the duke threw himself into the gaieties of London life. At that time, the two Miss Gun-

[1] Some readers will recollect Arthur Young's enthusiastic admiration of this work. "Here, Lewis XIV, thou art truly great! Here, with a gracious and benignant hand, thou dispensest ease and wealth to thy people! *Si sic omnia*—thy name would indeed have been revered."—*Tour in France*, p. 46

nings were "the reigning beauties" at Court. The elder sister was married to Lord Coventry, the younger, and more beautiful of the two, had been wedded to the fourth Duke of Hamilton, in Keith's Chapel, Mayfair, "with a ring of the bed-curtain, half an hour after twelve at night."[1] The duke had not long survived his midnight marriage. His duchess had been left a youthful and fascinating widow, and easily won the affections of the young Duke of Bridgewater. Their union had been already arranged, when the duke heard some stories which reflected on his future sister-in-law, Lady Coventry. He desired the Duchess of Hamilton to "desist from intimacy with her sister." The duchess refused, and the young couple separated for ever—the duke to devote his patrimony to the construction of canals, and the duchess to marry Jack Campbell and to become Duchess of Argyll.

Twenty years before the Duke of Bridgewater separated from the Duchess of Hamilton, the duke's father had obtained powers to make the Worsley brook navigable from his collieries at Worsley to the Irwell. The duke determined to carry out the enterprise which his father had originated. He was fortunate, at the outset, to secure the services of one of the most remarkable men whom this country ever produced, James Brindley. Born in a remote hamlet in Derbyshire in 1716, Brindley was twenty years older than his patron. At the age of seventeen he bound himself apprentice to a local wheelwright, but he had either so little dexterity, or his master had so little patience, that he was declared to be "a mere spoiler of wood." Two years afterwards, his master happened to send him to remove some damaged machinery from a mill which had been burnt down, and the superintendent, struck with the lad's conversation and good sense, stipulated that the "bungling apprentice" should be employed to execute the repairs. Brindley did the work, and did it so well that the neighbouring millowners, when they required his master's assistance, always specially asked that Brindley might be sent to them.

[1] Walpole to Mann, Feb 27, 1752. Smiles' *Early Engineers*, p. 157.

His master even remonstrated with him for doing his work too completely. But Brindley, though he had already shown himself an excellent workman, had given no signs of his extraordinary mechanical genius. His master was employed on the machinery of a new paper mill on the river Dane. The work was far beyond his skill, and, after a short time, his failure was evident. Brindley resolved to save his master's reputation and business, and, quietly leaving his own work, walked to Manchester. There he was allowed to inspect some similar machinery; and, having learned its details, returned to his master. The latter was astonished to find him one Monday morning quietly engaged on the work with which he himself had been so fruitlessly occupied. The task was not only successfully completed, but Brindley introduced several new improvements which had not been known before. His reputation was thus established, and his ingenuity as a mechanist and excellence as a workman gained him constantly increasing employment in the midland counties.

Brindley had accidentally become acquainted with Thomas Gilbert, the steward of the Duke of Bridgewater; and Gilbert introduced the millwright to the duke. Brindley decided that it was not merely practicable to make the canal from Worsley to Manchester, but that it was advisable and possible to cross the Irwell at Barton with an aqueduct. The project was ridiculed by even scientific persons it was called Brindley's "castle in the air," and the duke was strongly advised to recede from a purposeless expenditure. Happily, however, he had the good sense to put faith in the one man who was responsible for his work, and to reject the counsel of the irresponsible many. The castle in the air was erected; the canal was completed; the people of Manchester had the advantage of a cheap supply of coal from Worsley, and the duke gained the benefit of a ready market for the produce of his collieries.

The success, which attended the construction of the canal from Worsley to Manchester, induced the duke to attempt a much more important enterprise—the union of Manchester and Liverpool with a water road. The scheme provoked much

greater opposition than the smaller one which had been already carried out. The proprietors of the Mersey and Irwell navigation foresaw that the construction of a canal would lead to the abandonment of the river, and opposed the work. The work, too, necessitated far greater expenditure on the part of the promoter, far greater skill on that of the engineer, than the shorter and easier canal which had already been made. But the ability of Brindley overcame every difficulty: the perseverance of the duke triumphed over his want of money. Limiting his personal expenditure to a few hundreds a year, the duke devoted the whole of his vast income to the great undertaking. Though his credit fell to the lowest ebb, he succeeded, with the assistance of his bankers, in tiding over his worst difficulties; and, after five years of incessant anxiety, had the satisfaction of seeing the last portion of his great work successfully completed, and of finding himself the fortunate possessor of a princely property [1] The levity of the female sex has been the cause of many sorrows to mankind. the lightness of Lady Coventry probably occasioned many a heartache to the young Duke of Bridgewater. But never previously had light conduct in a woman produced such beneficial consequences to the human race The Duke of Bridgewater had been driven from society to devote himself to the noblest enterprise ever undertaken by one individual in any country or in any age, and his devotion had laid the foundations of the prosperity of two of the most prosperous of English cities—Manchester at one end, Liverpool at the other, of his great water road.

The successful completion of this work necessarily encouraged the commencement of similar undertakings in other places. Brindley was himself engaged on the Grand Trunk Canal, which united the Mersey and the Trent, and similar schemes were carried out with success both by himself and the other engineers who followed in his footsteps. "The country became thoroughly opened up in all directions by about 2600

[1] See Smiles' admirable account of this event in the *Life of Brindley*.

miles of navigable canals in England, 276 miles in Ireland, and 225 miles in Scotland." "At the beginning of the present century," says Dr Aiken, writing in 1795, "it was thought a most arduous task to make a high road practicable for carriages over the hills and moors which separate Lancashire from Yorkshire, and now they are pierced through by three navigable canals."[1] "It is probable," to quote a striking observation of Sir James Mackintosh, "that the quantity of labour employed in England on docks, canals, and other useful works, during the last fifty years (1760–1810), is greater than that employed on all the boasted works of Asia, from the Wall of China to the Pyramids."[2]

The introduction of canals into England was due to the ingenuity and perseverance of Brindley; another great engineer, soon afterwards, effected a new and different improvement in locomotion. Roads are apparently one of the simplest contrivances, which man has adopted, for the development of the resources of a country, but good roads were one of the last improvements which were introduced into modern Europe. The Romans, indeed, carried their great military roads through every country which they conquered; and every traveller has seen the admirable thoroughfares which were thus constructed throughout the country. But the art of road making fell into decay in the Middle Ages, and, in the eighteenth century, the best roads in England[3] were little better than bridle tracks, obstructed with mud at one period of the year, and with deep and dangerous ruts at another. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century attention was seriously directed to the loss and delay which bad roads occasioned;[4] but it was not till the latter half of it that a remarkable man first proved the possibility of constructing better highways. John Metcalf, the son of poor parents in Knaresborough, had the misfortune to lose his sight in 1723,

Roads

[1] Smiles' *Brindley*, p. 298.

[2] Mackintosh, vol. ii. p. 78.

[3] France was in advance of this country. Her roads excited Arthur Young's constant admiration.

[4] See, *inter alia*, Meteyard's *Wedgwood*, vol. i. p. 267.

when he was only six years old. But the boy, notwithstanding this loss, joined in the rough sports of his playmates. He climbed trees, and, guided by the directions of his comrades, actually took birds' nests; he learned to swim, and saved the lives of some of his companions; he rode and won a race at Harrogate; walked alone and found his way to London, married, and maintained his wife and himself with his fiddle. In 1765 Parliament passed an Act authorising the construction of a new turnpike road between Harrogate and Boroughbridge, and Metcalf offered to make three miles of the road, and completed his work with unusual speed. Encouraged by his success, he undertook to build a bridge at Boroughbridge, which he again succeeded in completing satisfactorily. His success on these two occasions led to his constant employment: 180 miles of road were constructed by him; the Huddersfield and Manchester road was carried by him over a bog which had been thought impracticable; and, what is more extraordinary, the blind man not only carried out "the highways designed for him by other surveyors, but himself personally surveyed and laid out many of the most important roads which he constructed." [1]

While Metcalf was making his three miles of highway between Harrogate and Boroughbridge, Thomas Telford, the only son of a poor widow, was herding sheep in Eskdale, and gaining some slight instruction in the parish school of Westerkirk. At fifteen he had passed from the sheep walk to a mason's at Lochmaben, and was diligently learning his master's business in the daytime, and reading books in the evening, lent to him by a neighbour. Even at that time, an obscure mason's apprentice, in a remote valley, he had faith in his own industry and in his own abilities.

"Nor pass the tentie curious lad,
Who o'er the ingle hangs his head,

[1] Smiles' *Telford*, p. 89, to which I am indebted for many of the preceding details.

And begs of neighbours books to read,
For hence arise
Thy country's sons, who far are spread,
Baith bold and wise."

So wrote he in rhyme—which proves that his education had not been useless—to Burns.

At twenty-five years of age, or in 1782, Telford set out for London, where he was employed, as an ordinary mason, on Somerset House. The excellence of his workmanship probably commended him to his employers, for, in 1784, he was engaged to superintend some works at Portsmouth. In 1786 he removed to Shropshire to advise Mr. Pulteney, the member for Shrewsbury, on some alterations which he intended to make in the castle. While at Shrewsbury, Pulteney's influence gained him an appointment as surveyor of public works to the county; and he became involved in the miscellaneous business connected with this office;—prison building, bridge repairing, road improving. This appointment was in its turn succeeded by another. Brindley's success had led to the construction of new canals in every part of the kingdom. It was decided to unite the Mersey, the Don, and the Severn, with a water road; and Telford was made engineer of the new canal.

The construction of this canal, or the Ellesmere Canal, as it is called, at once placed Telford at the summit of his profession The aqueducts, by which it is carried over the Ceriog and the Dee, far surpassed anything which had, up to that time, been attempted; and even now rank among the greatest achievements of our engineers. But Telford, in the meanwhile, had the merit of gaining distinction in another field. His duties as a county surveyor necessarily compelled him to turn his attention to bridge building; and his experience on the Ellesmere Canal taught him the use which might be made of iron for the purpose. An iron bridge had been erected in 1779 in Coalbrookdale; in 1787 the notorious Tom Paine proposed to bridge the Schuylkill in Philadelphia with a single iron arch of 400 feet span. The

bridge, which he had designed for the purpose, was rearranged by Burdon, and placed across the Wear at Sunderland in 1796. In the same year, in which the bridge at Sunderland was erected, Telford constructed the first of his numerous iron bridges at Buildwas. The possibility of using iron for such a purpose materially facilitated the progress of road improvement, in which, during the rest of his life, Telford was busily occupied.

The roads before Telford's time had three different defects. In the first place no one had yet mastered the lesson, which might have been learned from every milkpail, that the handle is no longer when it is lying flat on the pail than when it is held in the dairymaid's hand; and that a flat road going round a hill need not necessarily be longer than a steep incline going over it. In the next place the roads were so narrow that there was not room for two vehicles to pass; they were so flat or hollow that the rain did not run off them, and the metalling was so rotten that they were almost impassable. In the third place, there were no bridges with which the rivers could be crossed, and a high flood put an absolute bar to the communication between the most important towns. It, indeed, no longer took, as it had taken seventy years before, two whole days to go from Birmingham to London in the summer season [1] But, at the time at which this history opens, the roads were most imperfect. A parliamentary committee declared in 1814 "the road between Carlisle and Glasgow to be in so ruinous a state as often seriously to delay the mail, and endanger the lives of the passengers." In 1815 the Irish mail "took forty-one hours to reach Holyhead from the time of its setting out from St. Martin's le-Grand." It was natural that Telford's assistance should be invoked, both to remedy the roads in Wales and the roads in Scotland. He was employed by the Government to open up the Highlands; and 920 miles of road were made, and 1200 bridges were built, in eighteen years, viz., from 1802 to 1820, under his supervision. The new roads

[1] Meteyard's *Wedgwood*, vol. i p. 243, note.

changed the aspect of the country. "Agriculture made rapid progress. The use of carts became practicable, and manure was no longer carried to the fields on women's backs. Sloth and idleness gradually disappeared before the energy, activity, and industry which were called into life by improved communications. Better built cottages took the place of the old mud biggins with holes in their roof to let out the smoke. The pigs and cattle were treated to a separate table. The dunghill was turned to the outside of the house Tartan tatters gave place to the produce of Manchester and Glasgow looms; and very soon few young persons were to be found who could not both read and write English." [1]

Telford's roads had called a new Scotland into existence. Great, however, as his triumphs had been, Telford, in 1815, was on the eve of accomplishing even greater achievements He was under instructions at that time to improve the thoroughfares to the capital of Scotland and the capital of Ireland. The first of these commissions led to the construction, within a few months after its commencement, of the finest road which had up to that time been made in Great Britain. The second of them was completed ten years afterwards by the suspension of the most graceful of bridges across the Menai Straits. No other engineer had perpetuated his memory with a more enduring or more beautiful monument.

Before Telford's time the roads were repaired—if such a word may be applied to the process—by throwing on them unbroken gravel or flints, with no points to enable them to coalesce with each other. Telford's roads, on the contrary, were constructed on a permanent foundation of large stones, covered with a layer of smaller ones, broken to a suitable size, and bound together by the addition of gravel. At the same time another Scotchman—MacAdam—was applying the same system to the Bristol roads, of which he was made surveyor-general. MacAdam used to say that no stone should

[1] Smiles' *Telford*, pp 205, 246, 255. I am indebted to Mr. Smiles' work for most of the materials of this account of road-making in England.

be laid on a road which was not small enough to enter a man's mouth. MacAdam was in one sense unfortunate. He died a poor man. But, in another sense, he was the most fortunate of inventors. Hargreaves' great invention immortalised the name of his wife. But MacAdam's name—if the term may be allowed—was "macadamised" into our language. While macadamised roads continue to exist, posterity can hardly forget the debt which it owes to MacAdam.

Improved roads, at the period under review, gave an extraordinary impulse to travelling. In April 1820, Sir Walter Scott travelled from London to Scotland at the rate of ten miles an hour; but the feat was so extraordinary that it was thought proper to chronicle it in the "Annual Register." The poorest third-class passenger can now accomplish the same journey in less than one-fourth of the time. In the same year the Post Office started an extraordinary post, by which letters were conveyed at double rates to distant towns at a speed of eleven miles an hour. Serious doubts were, however, freely expressed as to the wisdom of this reform. Four years previously, or in 1816, the Trafalgar and Regulator coaches ran from Manchester to Liverpool in two hours and fifty minutes, or at the rate of twelve miles an hour. In the same year some speculative Jews ran a coach from London to Brighton in six hours. In one of the journeys the coachman broke three whips, and in one week fifteen horses died! The speed seemed so alarming that the parish officers at Newington laid an injunction against the drivers for furious driving, and the pace was reduced. No one seems to have imagined that any reduction of speed was necessary in the interests of humanity.[1]

The Brighton coach was forced to reduce its speed. But coaches were everywhere travelling at rates which would have seemed incredible a few years previously. Busy men, revelling

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xxxiv. p. 1041; *Ann. Reg.*, 1806, p. 161; 1820, p. 161, 263. On one occasion, in 1822, George IV. left Brighton at 8 A.M., and reached London at 12.40 P.M.; *Ann. Reg.*, 1822, Chron., p. 12. So far as I know, this is the fastest carriage journey on record.

in new wealth, were no longer willing to stay perpetually at home, or to consume three days in a journey between London and Birmingham. The old unwieldy vehicles, and the stout but slow horses, with which they had been previously drawn, were discarded for lighter coaches, in many instances admirably horsed. The astonished traveller was whirled along at the rate of ten or even twelve miles an hour; and the utmost possible speed in travelling seemed to have been attained when the fleetest of domestic animals was galloped from one end of the stage to the other. One thousand three hundred and fifty-five public stage coaches were assessed in 1812. The number was more than doubled in the next thirteen years. People flew about the country as they had never done before, and remote towns, which had stagnated for generations in torpor and isolation, breathed with a new and healthier life in consequence of the daily passage of the coach The improved coaches soon led to an accelerated postal service. Up to 1784, the mails were conveyed either on horseback or in carts specially constructed for the purpose. In that year John Palmer, of Bath, suggested the common-sense alternative of employing the ordinary coaches for the purpose. The service of the post was both accelerated and improved by the change, and the Government obtained a considerable addition to the revenue.[1] The rates which the public had to pay for the convenience of sending letters were, however, still excessive. No letter was carried for less than 2*d*.; and a letter was only conveyed for a short distance of seven miles for this sum. A letter from London to Windsor cost 5*d*; a letter from London to Cambridge 8*d*; a letter from London to Durham a shilling Certain privileged individuals were indeed allowed to send their letters free. The frank of a member of Parliament saved these gentlemen and their friends from the penalty of excessive postage. That portion of the public, which had the privilege of a member's

The Post

[1] The gross receipts of the Post Office amounted in 1816 to £2,193,000, the net profits to £1,526,000. The former were five times, the latter nearly ten times, as large as they had been before the adoption of Palmer's reform.

acquaintance, conducted their correspondence for nothing. The larger portion, who knew no members, or who were too proud to ask a favour for the sake of saving a shilling, were charged excessive rates of postage.

Improved roads, then, at the period at which this history commences, had given facilities to locomotion on land. The introduction of canals had extended communication by water The new roads enabled the light traffic to be conducted at unprecedented rates of speed. The canals carried the heavy traffic with extraordinary cheapness. It seemed impossible for the ingenuity of man to devise easier or better means of communication: yet the ingenuity of man was on the eve of superseding the coach and the barge with new methods of locomotion Many years were still to pass before the completion of the first railway worked by steam. But the first British steamer steamed down the Clyde before the termination of the Peninsular War. Steam navigation was introduced by Fulton in America and Bell in Scotland. Henry Bell was born in Linlithgowshire in 1767. He was educated at the parish school, and apprenticed to his uncle, a millwright. Later on in life he served under a ship-modeller at Bowness, and under Rennie, the great engineer, in London Returning to Scotland, he settled first at Glasgow, and subsequently at Helensburgh, where his wife kept an inn, while he devoted himself to mechanical pursuits. At the beginning of 1812 he had the satisfaction of overcoming the various difficulties in his way, and of seeing the *Comet*, a small steamer of twenty-five tons' burden, and three horse-power, steam down the Clyde at the rate of seven miles an hour. Considerable interest was felt at the new invention. But no one dreamed, on first seeing the *Comet*, of the future of steam. It was thought impracticable to construct a steamer capable of carrying sufficient coal for a long voyage, and the dangers of even short voyages were considerable. The boilers were continually exploding; the newspapers of the day had constantly to chronicle serious and fatal accidents in consequence; and the House of Commons found it necessary in 1817 to appoint a committee to enquire

into the subject. Experience and skill, however, soon diminished the danger of these explosions. Within eight years of the first voyage of the *Comet*, a steamer crossed the Atlantic. The subsequent progress of steam was rapid. There were only two steamers, with a tonnage of 456 tons, in the whole British Empire in 1814. There were 126 steamers, with a tonnage of 15,739 tons, in 1824. There were 462 steamers, with a tonnage of 50,735 tons, in 1834; and 988 steamers, with a tonnage of 125,675 tons, in 1844. In 1874, 4033 steamers, with a tonnage of 1,870,611 tons, belonged to the United Kingdom alone.[1]

In 1814, however, the foremost thinkers could not realise the future that was before them. Mackintosh, who was passing an exile's life in Bombay, mentioned in his Diary in 1811 that "a passage yacht, wrought against wind and tide by a steam-engine of the power of twenty horses, goes now from New York to Albany, and performs one hundred and sixty miles in thirty-two hours. This is going at the rate of five miles an hour, and would insure a passage from Portsmouth to Bombay in about one hundred days." "Why," he plaintively adds, "were we not born a century later?" The exile at Bombay might well have longed for a period which would bring him news from England in a hundred days. Only a few months afterwards he complains that it is "seven months from the date of the last London news" Yet, within fifteen years of this entry in his diary, the first steamer—the *Enterprise*—completed a voyage from Falmouth to Calcutta.[2] If the birth of Mackintosh had been delayed only a little more than half a century, he would have smiled at the plaintive wish which he recorded in 1811. In that case he would have received an English letter in Bombay, not in a hundred, but in twenty days: he might have received a telegram from England in twenty minutes.

The increased facilities for travelling, which were thus every-

[1] *Hans.*, vol. xxxvi. p. 271, *Enc. Brit.*, ad verb. Bell, *Ann. Reg.*, 1817, pp. 24, 54, 55, 60, 1819, p. 41, Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p 319.

[2] Mackintosh, vol. ii. pp. 79, 97, *Ann. Reg*, 1826, Chron. 66.

where being introduced, were, in one sense, the consequence, in another sense the cause, of an increased population. The growth of the people, and their greater wealth, supplied every day more persons who were anxious to travel, and means were consequently found to afford them the facilities which they desired. But the great towns, which were everywhere being built in the country, could not have existed, or could not at any rate have been fed, if the old means of locomotion had alone been available. It was almost impracticable to alter the course of a river; but there was no place to which a road could not be brought, there were few places to which a canal could not be led. New centres of population, which, before the time of Brindley and Telford, could not have flourished, rapidly acquired a new prosperity. London, indeed, still retained the old predominance, of which nothing seemed able to deprive it. Thinkers and legislators, philosophers and statesmen, have, in their days, done their best to interfere with the growth of London, but London has grown despite them all. In the seventeenth century the political economists, as they would be termed now, or the political arithmeticians, as they were styled then, were perpetually showing that the growth of London was destroying the whole country, and that the capital was being enriched by causes which were impoverishing the provinces. They proved by figures, which seemed incontestable, that, after a certain number of years, the whole population would be concentrated in the metropolis, and that the country would be entirely deserted. Statesmen were easily frightened by the predictions of these dreamers, and by the apparent impossibility of feeding so vast an aggregation of people. The citizens complained that the new houses would reduce the value of the old ones; the country gentlemen that they would depopulate the country. Statesmen, citizens, and country gentlemen were agreed that the increase of building was prejudicial—that the head of the nation was growing too big for its body.

London.

The sovereigns of England, after their own fashion, endeavoured to deal with the evil. Nearly 300 years ago

Elizabeth issued a decree that no addition should be made to the capital. Canute might as well have expected the flowing tide to ebb. James I. attempted to follow his predecessor's example. The fact that a new law seemed necessary might have convinced him that no law would be effectual. James, however, has himself the credit of having made it possible for the citizens to disregard the law. The growth of London could not be checked by either king or parliament, but it might have been arrested by a dearth of water; and in the early days of the seventeenth century London was in serious want of water. The genius of Sir Hugh Myddelton found means for supplying the deficiency: the generous support of the king made the completion of Sir Hugh's work practicable With a better water supply the city rapidly increased. A tax was placed on "new foundations" during the Commonwealth, but the town still grew St. Giles' was built, in what had previously been fields, in the middle of the century. St. Anne's, Soho, was formed into a new parish in 1685. The inhabitants of the new street which had just been constructed on Lord St. Alban's property, and which had been called "Jermyn" Street in compliment to the earl, commenced the church of St. James in the same year. Neither the decrees of kings nor the arguments of philosophers were interfering with the constant growth of brick and mortar [1]

The town, however, still grew, though, compared with its present size, it was small. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Mr. Romilly, the father of the great lawyer, living in the heart of the city, ascribed the death of several of his children to the unwholesomeness of a constant town residence. He accordingly hired some rooms at Marylebone, which was then a small village about a mile distant from town. Twenty-four years afterwards, Romilly himself, while studying for his profession, took chambers in Gray's Inn. "In the depth of

[1] Those who care to follow this subject further may refer to Macaulay's Works, vol. i. p 272, Anderson's *History of Commerce*, vol ii. pp. 209, 210, 308, 572, 617, Davenant's Works, and the curious tract, *The Apology for the Builder*, which Lord Overstone has reprinted in his private collection of Tracts.

winter," he wrote to his sister, Madame Roget, "the moment the sun peeps out I am in the country; a cold country it is; for, having only one row of houses between me and Highgate and Hampstead, a north-west wind blows full against my chambers." Twenty years later still, Lord Eldon, then Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, took a house in Gower Street, now one of the most populous portions of central London. "He used to say that his house there was the pleasantest he ever occupied. He could look over the fields, then open, as far as Hampstead, Highgate, and Islington, and had a garden with excellent vegetables, and even peaches."[1] Though Gower Street was still in the country, the town was growing rapidly. London and its suburbs in 1801 contained only 864,845 persons. In 1811 the population had grown to 1,009,546. It increased from 1811 to 1821 at the rate of 20,000 souls a year. Nor was the increase of its population the most remarkable feature. New public buildings, new bridges, new streets, were in course of erection and formation. At the close of the great war only three bridges—London Bridge, Blackfriars, and Westminster—united the north and south banks of the Thames in London. It had taken five centuries to throw three bridges across the river. It hardly took five years to supplement these three bridges with three others—Waterloo, Vauxhall, and Southwark[2] The first of these still retains its pre-eminence as the finest bridge in London; the second was one of the earliest examples of the use of iron in bridge-making; the third was considered at the time remarkable for the span of its arches. All three of them were opened before the close of 1819

Nor was it in bridge-making alone that London was exerting herself. The Custom House was completed in 1817. The new road along the banks of the Thames between Westminster and Vauxhall was projected about the same period. In the midst of the exhausting struggle in the Peninsula a design had been formed for the creation of a new park in Marylebone,

[1] Romilly, vol. i. pp 9 and 139, Twiss' *Eldon*, vol i p. 354.
[2] *Ann Reg.*, 1810, pp. 151, 153.

and its union by a new broad street with Pall Mall. The scheme received the active support of the Regent, who desired that his name should be associated with a liberal encouragement of the fine arts. The Whigs were not ashamed to declare that the Tories purchased the confidence of their prince by supporting his project. It would be well for the morality of public men if no more serious charge could be brought against them. The ministers, who promoted the formation of Regent's Park and the construction of Regent Street, deserve the approbation, rather than the reproach, of posterity.[1]

Notwithstanding these improvements, however, locomotion in London was still difficult. In 1815 there were no railways, no tramroads, no steamboats, no omnibuses, no cabs, and only three bridges. Watermen still stood at the different "stairs" which led from the narrow streets to the river. Only 1300 hackney coaches were allowed to ply in the streets. The modern police had not superseded the old watch, and gentlemen, who walked in the metropolis, commonly carried arms for their own protection. A beneficent discovery had, indeed, just increased the safety and convenience of London The existence of an inflammable gas in ordinary coal had for years attracted attention, but it was not till the close of last century that Mr. Murdoch, of Soho, a Cornish engineer, used it to illuminate his own house and offices at Redruth,[2] "a large theatre was most brilliantly illuminated [in 1804] by inflammable air," and in 1807 gas was experimentally applied to street illumination in Pall Mall. The suggestion that it was practicable to light a city with gas was, in the first instance, received with ridicule. Campbell, after recording the brilliant illumination of a theatre, goes on to say—"The man pretends to extract the gas from smoke. . . . He proposes to . . . supply every house in London with the gas in the same manner

[1] It may be worth noting, as a striking proof of the growth of London, that, so lately as 1828, Croker had a day's shooting in Regent's Park.—*Memoirs*, i. 430

[2] *Pict Hist.*, vol. iv. p. 688, M'Culloch's *Com. Dict.*, ad verb. Gas.

as they are now supplied with water by the New River Company. I understand he is merely a copier of Le Bon, a French chemist, who abandoned the plan as impracticable and absurd."[1] Lord Lauderdale recorded in the House of Lords his formal protest[2] against the first Gas Bill—"because this House, by agreeing to this bill, must encourage the people of this country to embark their fortunes in a speculation in which it appears to me, after the most deliberate consideration of the evidence given in the committee, no intelligent man can doubt that an adventurer must lose the whole of what he has subscribed, and all that he may, under the authority of this bill, choose to subscribe." But legislators *in esse* and Chancellors *in posse* were not the only sceptics. A great chemist is said to have declared that it was as reasonable to talk of ventilating London with windmills as of lighting it with gas.[3] So useful an invention would, however, have survived a more formidable protest and a more cutting sarcasm. Gas was rapidly introduced into every city. It was incidentally remarked in 1823 that 215 miles of London streets were lighted with gas.[4] The cheapness and brilliancy of the new light led to its almost universal adoption, and the population no longer tolerated the "darkness visible" to which they had previously been accustomed. It is a singular circumstance that the introduction of gas increased the use of oil and candles "The greater brilliancy of the streets" made the people "dissatisfied with the quantum of light previously thought sufficient within their houses."[5]

It requires, at the present time, an effort of imagination to realise the fact that, at the close of the great war, Dublin was the second town within the limits of the United Kingdom. London contained about 1,100,000 inhabitants; the population of Manchester and Salford cou'd

Dublin.

[1] *Life of Lord Campbell*, vol. i. p. 155.
[2] Lord Lauderdale, *Protests of the House of Lords*, vol. ii. p. 493.
[3] So at least I have always been told that Sir H Davy said.
[4] *Ann Reg.*, 1823, Chron. 59.
[5] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 590.

not have comprised 140,000 persons; and no other city in Great Britain was equally populous. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Dublin was estimated by Rutter to contain upwards of 160,000 people; the population, according to Whitelaw, had increased, before the close of the century, to 182,000. In 1821, when the first complete census was taken in Ireland, the population of Dublin was found to be 185,881. It is perhaps safe to assume that it amounted in 1816 to 180,000 souls.

The situation of Dublin is at once convenient and picturesque. Washed by the Liffey; situated on a convenient bay; at an easy distance from the English coast; Dublin ought, perhaps, to have maintained her position among the cities of the empire. Her admirers were willing to contrast the Bay of Dublin with the Bay of Naples; her public buildings might fairly be compared with the edifices of London, a viceregal court promoted expenditure among her tradesmen; a noble university formed a worthy rival of the two twin institutions at Oxford and Cambridge. Though the dominant race was unwilling to allow the Irish to participate in the political privileges, which were justly their due, there were few material advantages which it was not ready to extend to them. With smaller capabilities at the outset, Belfast is proving now that an Irish town may emulate an English rival. What Belfast is doing now, Dublin might easily have done in 1816.

It will be necessary, later on in this history, to trace the causes which have contributed to the unhappy position of the Irish people. It is sufficient, in the present chapter, to describe the condition of the metropolis of Ireland in 1816. During that year works were in progress which ought to have insured its future prosperity. Rennie, who was uniting the north and south of London with the marvellous bridges which he was throwing across the Thames, was engaged in extending Dublin harbour. Eight hundred thousand pounds were ultimately expended upon the work. At the same time Telford, instructed to improve the communication between the British and Irish capitals, was gradually carrying his great road through Wales.

Modern inventions were simultaneously shortening the distance between the two cities; and in 1827 a fast coach to Bristol, with a steamer to Dublin, brought the mails from London to Ireland in only thirty-seven hours.[1] But the Irish cared little for harbours, engineering, or steam. Politics, or the agitations, which seemed inseparable from their politics, were their eternal occupation Disorderly assemblages constantly disturbed the peace of the capital; the small police force, at the disposal of the authorities, was unequal to the task of preserving order. A large body of troops, under the immediate orders of the Lord-Lieutenant, was always stationed in the city; and military authority alone maintained an imperfect and intermittent tranquillity in the streets of Dublin. Perpetual excitement and chronic riots naturally interfered with the prosperity of the town; and Dublin ceased to grow, as the rest of the kingdom was growing, not from any natural defect either of situation or of climate, not from any artificial restraints, imposed upon it by an unenlightened legislature, but from the feverish excitement in which its people passed their lives, and the distrust which its condition generated among the moneyed and the commercial classes.

Macaulay tells us that, at the close of the seventeenth century, Bristol was the second city in Great Britain. There were at the least five cities more populous in 1815. The Mersey and the Clyde were defeating the Severn and the Avon; and Liverpool and Glasgow were rapidly becoming the great ports of the West. Yet Bristol had advantages which might have saved it from its defeat. Gloucestershire and Wales were as rich in mineral wealth as the neighbourhood of Manchester; and the estuary of the Severn was more accessible and less dangerous than the estuary of the Mersey Less than 100 years ago, "the small quantity of Manchester woollens and cottons, manufactured for exportation, was carried on horses' backs to Bewdley and Bridgnorth, on the Severn, from whence" it was "floated down that river to Bristol, then

Manchester

[1] *Colchester*, vol. iii. p 299.

the chief seaport on the west coast."[1] The energy of the Duke of Bridgewater, and the genius of Brindley, diverted this trade into a new channel. "Liverpool," as Telford wrote in 1799, "has taken firm root in the country by means of the canals; it is young, vigorous, and well situated. Bristol is sinking in commercial importance; its merchants are rich and indolent, and in their projects they are always too late."[2]

Since the days of Brindley, Liverpool has succeeded in distancing its great northern rival, and is now the second among the cities of England. Manchester was far the more populous and thriving of the two in 1815. Manchester, at that time, must have contained very nearly 140,000 people, Liverpool did not certainly number more than 120,000 inhabitants. Manchester had, for centuries, been a comparatively thriving town. In 1724 it is said to have contained 2400 families (about 12,000 souls), and "their trade was 'incredibly large' in tapes, ticking, girth-webb, and fustians In 1757 the united population of Manchester and Salford was only 20,000." At that time there was no private carriage in all Manchester. There was no wine merchant nearer than Preston. The roads were so bad that a village twenty miles from the town was more inaccessible than London is now, and in winter food was frequently so scarce that food riots occasionally occurred, resulting in loss of life.[3] The Duke of Bridgewater's energy galvanised this drowsy town into life. His first canal gave the manufacturers cheap coal; his second and greatest canal gave them an easy outlet for their produce The genius of Watt supplied them, at the same time, with a new motive power; and Manchester rapidly expanded from the fresh impulse which its trade received. The population of the town, which had amounted in 1774 to 41,032, increased in 1801 to 84,020, or more than doubled in twenty-seven years.

Liverpool was, at the same time, advancing with nearly

[1] Smiles' *Brindley*, p. 240.
[2] Telford to Mr Andrew Little, 1799, quoted in Smiles' *Telford*, p 185.
[3] Smiles' *Brindley*, pp. 158 165.

Liverpool.

equally rapid strides. Chester had undoubtedly been originally considered the chief port of north-western England. But, as time advanced, the estuary of the Dee silted up, or the larger vessels of the day required deeper water. The approach to Chester from the sea became more and more difficult; and an attempt was made, which proved, however, ineffectual, to cut a new and deeper channel. "The trade of Chester decayed, and that of Liverpool rose upon its ruins." Three centuries before, "the people of her Majesty's decayed town of Liverpool," had petitioned Elizabeth to be relieved from a subsidy. In 1634–5, when Charles I. "made his unconstitutional levy of ship money throughout England, Liverpool was let off with a contribution of £15, whilst Chester paid £100, and Bristol not less than £1000."[1] In 1701 only 102 vessels belonged to Liverpool, and its tonnage was inferior to that of Yarmouth and Exeter, and only just equal to that of Whitby and Scarborough.[2] But its progress was thenceforward rapid; 1245 vesse'ls entered the port in 1760; 4746 in 1800, 6888 in 1816. The population rose, almost as rapidly as that of Manchester—from 79,722 in 1801 to 100,240 in 1811, and to 131,801 in 1821. At the close of the great war, therefore, Liverpool must have contained about 116,000 people.

The Liverpool of 1816, however, was a very different town from the marvellous city which is now seated on the banks of the Mersey. In 1816, Liverpool did not possess a single steamer. She has now the finest steam fleet in the world. In 1819 the first steamer which had ever crossed the Atlantic—a small vessel of 350 tons burden—arrived in the Mersey. A day never passes now in which vessels ten times that size do not leave and enter the port, bound to and from the great trans-Atlantic Continent. In 1816 the northern side of the Mersey was amply sufficient for the accommodation of the whole trade of Liverpool; and a group of only four houses

[1] Smiles' *Brindley*, p 186 Haydn, in his *Dictionary of Dates*, says that it was rated for £26 ship money in 1630.

[2] M'Culloch's *Commercial Dict.*, "Ships." So late as 1787, Arthur Young wrote, "We must not name Liverpool in competition with Bordeaux."—*Tour in France*, p. 67.

marked the site of the future Birkenhead.[1] The trade of Liverpool can no longer be conducted in Liverpool alone; and Birkenhead to-day supports as many people as Liverpool contained at the commencement of the century.

At the present time Glasgow is the second city in the United Kingdom. In 1816 it ranked only as fourth in importance. It was less populous than London, Dublin, and Manchester, but more populous than Liverpool. Glasgow, like Liverpool, owed much to its situation; it owed more to the industry and energy of its inhabitants. Seated on the Clyde, one of the noblest of the rivers of Scotland, it has from the first had a ready access to the western seas. The estuary of the Clyde will carry now the largest vessels in the world. In 1800 it was only five feet deep at high water. Long, however, before that time, Glasgow had grown rapidly in size and prosperity. Originally a cluster of small houses round a venerable cathedral, it owed its chief prosperity to the salmon fisheries of the Clyde. On its incorporation as a borough it placed the figure of a salmon on its shield. The salmon have long been driven from the river; but the fisheries have been replaced by more beneficial industries. The population rose from 4500 in 1560 to about 12,000 in 1707. But the union opened out to its inhabitants the benefit of the American trade. The thrifty Scotch readily availed themselves of the opportunity, and Glasgow rapidly increased in importance. The broom disappeared from the banks of the Clyde; and the "Broomielaw" resounded with the noise of an active trade Glasgow in 1815 may be assumed to have contained from 125,000 to 130,000 people. Nor was the progress of the great northern town undeserved. Glasgow has taken the lead in the greatest improvements of the century; she has concentrated within her limits the various industries of a dozen other cities. Manchester is the capital of cotton, Leeds of wool, Birmingham of iron, Newcastle of coal, Macclesfield of silk, Stoke of crockery. But the industries, which have made these

Glasgow

[1] Helps' *Life of Brassey*, p 24, M'Culloch's *Commercial Dict.*

great cities prosperous, all flourish on the banks of the Clyde. Glasgow has wrested from London her iron shipbuilding; she shares with Liverpool the great American trade. The energy of her children has made her the second town in the United Kingdom.

Edinburgh has grown with less rapidity than her western rival. Yet Edinburgh has a charm which Glasgow cannot claim. Vedi Napoli e mori: so the Italian expresses his sense of the rare beauty of the Bay of Naples. But the situation of Edinburgh, if less beautiful, is more romantic than that of Naples. Nothing in Europe is more picturesque than the high rugged rock on which the castle stands. No town view in Europe is more interesting than the prospect which is afforded to the pedestrian from the summit of Arthur's Seat. Yet the spectator in 1815 looked on a very different Edinburgh from that which meets the eye of the tourist to day. Then, indeed, as now, the old castle stood at the one end of the High Street, and Holyrood at the other. Then as now the curious could visit the spot on which the Tolbooth stood, or see the house in which Knox dwelt Then as now the Parliament House, the University, and the princely Library which the latter enjoys, were open to inspection. The Edinburgh of the olden time flourished then in all its picturesque beauty. But the Edinburgh of to-day was in an imperfect condition. Fifty years before, the construction of the North Bridge over the deep ravine which divides the old from the new town, had made the building of the new town possible. In 1815 one portion of the work had actually been finished. But the Regent Bridge had not connected Calton Hill with the town. Sixteen years were to pass before the completion of Dean Bridge was to lead to the erection of a second new town. The port of Leith, which is now connected with the capital, was separated from it by a wide interval in 1815.

Edinburgh

Yet much of the interest, which clings to Edinburgh to-day, is due to the men with whom its name was associated three-quarters of a century ago. We see the place where Robertson lived, and wrote, and died; where Playfair, Dugald Stewart,

and Adam Smith taught; where Jeffrey and Wilson wrote; the school in which Scott was educated, and the house in which he lived. More tourists have probably gazed on the supposed site of David Deans' humble home than have visited the scene of Rizzio's murder. The genius of romance has added a new charm to the beauties of nature; and the most picturesque of European towns has a fresh interest because it is recognised among all English speaking nations as the birthplace of Sir Walter Scott.

Every one of the towns, which have thus been enumerated, has easy access to the sea. London on the Thames, Dublin on the Liffey, Manchester on the Irwell, Liverpool on the Mersey, Glasgow on the Clyde, Edinburgh in close connection with the great port of Leith and the Firth of Forth—all these places have direct communication with the sea, the great highway both of the ancient and of the modern world. Birmingham does not enjoy any such advantage; it was in 1815 a smaller place than any of those which have been hitherto noticed in this chapter. In 1650 Birmingham is said to have contained only fifteen streets, and 5472 inhabitants; in 1741 it had fifty-four streets, and 24,660 inhabitants; in Johnson's youth, it had no bookseller. In 1758, Soho, now one of the busiest parts of the city, was a solitary rabbit warren[1] But the progress of Birmingham was thenceforward rapid. Its population in 1811 consisted of 85,753 persons, it had risen to 106,000 persons in 1821. Birmingham, therefore, could hardly have contained 100,000 persons at the close of the great war. Yet the situation of the town is not altogether disadvantageous. It is seated in the centre of England. The Rea and the Tame, both in its immediate vicinity, find their way to the Trent and the Severn, the Humber and the Bristol Channel. Neither the Rea nor the Tame were, however, navigable, and Birmingham for generations was therefore dependent on its roads. Signs of improvement were, however, rapidly displaying themselves. Birmingham

[1] Meteyard's *Wedgwood*, vol. i p. 241, ii. p 25.

Wedgwood had developed Stoke and Etruria. Watt's partner, Boulton, had thrown new life into his native town by the introduction of the steam-engine, and the formation of the Birmingham Canal. Two centuries before, Camden had described the place as full of inhabitants, and resounding with hammers and anvils, for the most part of the smelters. "In the middle of the eighteenth century, Hutton, on visiting it, declared, 'I had been among dreamers, but now I saw men awake.'"[1] "Birmingham," wrote Telford, fifty years afterwards, "famous for its buttons and locks, its ignorance and barbarism —its prosperity increases with the corruption of tastes and morals. Its nicknacks, hardware, and gilt gimcracks are proofs of the former; and its locks and bars, and the recent barbarous conduct of its populace, are evidences of the latter."[2] In 1815, however, only forty-two steam-engines were at work in the town; and Birmingham had no town-hall, no public park, no corporation, and no member. It had been the scene of constant rioting, and prudent persons regarded with disfavour a community which had burned Priestley's library, and had constantly advocated extreme political opinions. The full consequences of the discoveries of the previous half-century had not been felt; and Birmingham was only gradually attaining the greatness which it subsequently acquired. Watt, Boulton, and Brindley had laid the foundations of its new prosperity. It was reserved for Stephenson to consummate the work which they had originated.

At the close of the great war there was no other town within the limits of the United Kingdom with 100,000 inhabitants Bristol, which for centuries had ranked only second to London, had about 80,000 people, Leeds from 70,000 to 80,000; Sheffield from 60,000 to 70,000; and Plymouth and Portsmouth from 50,000 to 60,000. Norwich, which, in the days of Charles II., had been the third town in England, ranked in 1816 as the tenth, and probably con-

[1] Smiles' *Boulton and Watt*, p. 162.
[2] Smiles' *Telford*, p 149.

tained rather more than 40,000 persons. Grouse flew over the site of Middlesborough; Swansea was little more than a village; Merthyr was dumb; Barrow had no furnace, no harbour, no inhabitants.

The population had grown rapidly during the latter years of the great war. The best authorities conclude that, while only 1,000,000 souls were added to England and Wales during the first half of the eighteenth century, the population increased by about 2,000,000 from 1750 to 1801. The next twenty years saw a growth as large as that which had taken place in the preceding fifty. The multiplication of the people would not have been possible without the canals and the roads, which Brindley, Telford, and MacAdam had constructed. The populous towns, which were rising everywhere into importance, could not have prospered, and could not even have been fed, without their assistance. But, if improved roads facilitated the growth of great towns, the growth of great towns promoted quicker and better locomotion. The causes acted and reacted on each other Every new road, every new canal, increased the population. Every addition to the population suggested the formation of some new artery of communication.

Nor was it within the limits of the United Kingdom alone that communication was becoming easier and more frequent. Twenty years of war had seriously injured the commerce of every continental nation; but twenty years of war had not arrested the progress of our own. Britain undoubtedly enjoys peculiar advantages for prosecuting an advantageous foreign commerce. Fortunate in her situation, happy in her climate, rich in her mineral wealth, she has been thrust by nature into the Atlantic, the medium of communication between the New World and the Old. But the advantages which the United Kingdom thus enjoys, are, it must be remembered, shared by other nations. Spain, with her ample seaboard, her admirable position, her great rivers, and her fertile resources, was at least as capable as this country of ultimately becoming the great emporium of the

Commerce.

world. Spain, too, three centuries ago, occupied in the commonwealth of nations the position which Great Britain has since attained. Spanish enterprise had won for Spain, as British enterprise has since acquired for England, a world-wide dominion. It was the Spaniard's boast then, as it is the Briton's now, that the sun never set on the dominions of his sovereign. The ships of Spain penetrated to every country and to every sea; the wealth of Spain excited the envy of Europe. Her children had proved themselves the most enterprising, the most warlike, the most adventurous people in the world.

The commercial supremacy of England rose on the ruins of Spanish commerce. Religious intolerance, promoting persecution and civil war, paved the way for the fall of Spain. A religious reformation, encouraging free thought and free enterprise, paved the way for the rise of England. The Mersey, with its dangerous sandbanks, the Clyde, with only five feet of water, became, in the hands of a free and enterprising people, two of the greatest ports in the world; and England prospered, not from any natural advantages which it possessed over other nations, but from the spirit and perseverance which a people, free to think and free to act, are certain to display.

The English mercantile marine "first became considerable in the reign of Elizabeth; and gradually increased under her successors James I. and Charles I." At the time of the Restoration 95,266 tons of British shipping annually "cleared" our ports. Thirty years even of Stuart government doubled the amount; and 190,533 tons of British shipping cleared outwards at the time of the Revolution of 1688. At the commencement of the eighteenth century 3281 vessels, measuring 261,222 tons, and manned by 27,196 men and boys, comprised the entire mercantile marine of England and Wales. In 1816, 9744 vessels, representing a capacity of 1,415,723 tons, manned by 90,119 men, and belonging to British and Irish shipmasters, entered the ports of the United Kingdom. The number of vessels had been trebled in a little more than a

century; their carrying capacity had been increased six-fold[1] The increase had been great, but it was to become much greater. In the next fifty-eight years the tonnage rose from 1,415,723 to 12,751,128 tons, or increased nine-fold. Thus the increase in the fifty-eight years has been ten times as great as that in the previous 116 years.[2] Improvements in the art of navigation had been encouraged by the development of the mercantile marine. "In the last thirty years," wrote Mackintosh, in 1811, "chronometers, lunar observations, and copper bottoms have been brought into general use. If three improvements of equal magnitude be made every thirty years, what will be the state of the art of navigation in three centuries?"[3]

The vast additions, which had been made to the mercantile marine of Britain, were attributable to the development of its carrying trade. The carrying trade had grown from the closer intercourse which the British were gradually establishing with every part of the globe. The causes which, in the first instance, might have been expected to have interfered with its growth, had encouraged its development. From 1701 to 1816 England had been frequently at war. But the fortunes of war had opened vast empires to our traders, and the superiority, which our fleets had acquired over their adversaries, had driven many rival flags from the seas. In 1816 Britain had dependencies in every portion of the globe, and dictated the terms on which the commerce of the world should be conducted. The Seven Years' War had given her India and Canada, Dominica, Granada, St. Vincent, and Tobago: Jamaica had been taken in 1655, Gibraltar in 1704, Ceylon in 1796, Malta in 1800, the Mauritius, St. Helena, and the Cape in 1806. Antigua,

[1] M'Culloch's *Commercial Dict*, ad verb. Ships.

[2] The tonnage, entering and cleared from English ports, is, of course, totally different to the tonnage belonging to them. The reader who cares for further information on the subject will find it in Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p 402.

[3] Mackintosh, vol ii. p. 171. It may be worth adding, as the fact is not generally known, that Stockdale, in his *Annals of Cartmel* (p. 124), says that he has in his possession a silver medal, having on the reverse a ship of 70 tons, the first iron ship ever built. It was built by J. Wilkinson in 1787.

Barbadoes, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, the Bahamas, the Bermudas, and Anguilla, had been occupied by British settlers in various periods of the seventeenth century; St. Lucia, Trinidad, Demerara, and Essequibo, had been captured by us during the great war which concluded in 1815. The foundations of the vast Australian empire had been laid by the settlement of New South Wales in 1787, and of Van Diemen's Land in 1803; while the allies at Vienna had entrusted to our safe custody the Ionian Islands in the Mediterranean, and Heligoland in the North Sea.

From a strategical point of view, Gibraltar, Malta, and the Cape are the most important of these possessions. Ever since Gibraltar had been taken by Rooke in 1704, it had proved an impregnable fortress. It was in vain that the Spanish and French had endeavoured to wrest it from its victors within a few months after its original capture. It was in vain that the Spaniards renewed the attack in 1720 and 1727. It was in vain that, again in conjunction with the French, they brought against its diminutive garrison in 1779 the largest armament that had ever been arrayed against a single fortress. Elliot, in 1779, shed a new lustre on Rooke's achievement, and Gibraltar since then has remained in the undisputed possession of its British conquerors.

Gibraltar.

The narrow strait, which the rock at Gibraltar partially commands, affords its possessors invariable access to the Mediterranean. The island of Malta offers the requisite shelter to the fleets of any nation navigating the great inland sea. Nearly three centuries and a half have passed since the Knights Hospitallers of St. John, driven by the Turks from their pleasant home in Rhodes, retired to the barren rock of Malta, which Charles the Great placed at their disposal. More than three centuries have passed since Solyman the Magnificent exhausted the resources of the Ottoman empire in a fruitless attempt to drive La Valette and his scanty band of followers from their crumbling defences. The town of Valetta commemorates his prowess, and the signal discomfiture of his assailants. The knights of Malta had de-

Malta.

fended an hastily fortified position against the flower of Ottoman chivalry. The standard of England floats now over impregnable fortifications.

For 233 years after the repulse of the Turks, the Knights Hospitallers of St. John retained possession of the rock of Malta. But the knights of 1798 were animated by a different spirit from that of La Valette and his heroic companions. Treachery opened doors which no strength could have readily forced, and Malta yielded to Napoleon towards the close of the century. A barren island in the middle of the Mediterranean could not, however, be held by a nation whose fleets were driven off the seas. The battle of the Nile decided its fate, the English reducing it soon afterwards by blockade. It is remarkable that its new possessors failed at first to recognise the importance of their acquisition, and that they consented, at the peace of Amiens, to restore it, on conditions, to its old owners, the Knights Hospitallers of St. John. But the intrigues of Buonaparte in Egypt convinced even Addington of the great importance of this new possession. The British Government declined to evacuate the island, and the possession of Malta became the immediate cause of the great war, which was only finally concluded on the field of Waterloo

The opening of the Suez Canal has diminished the importance of the Cape of Good Hope. The tedious journey round the continent of Africa has been superseded by a nearer route. M. de Lesseps has united the waters of the Mediterranean with those of the Red Sea, and engineers are seriously contemplating the possibility of reaching India by an Asian railway. It requires, under such circumstances, an effort of the imagination to realise the period when men were anxiously debating the possibility of reaching India by sea. Yet their anxiety led to the greatest discoveries which the world has ever known. It was with this object that, nearly four centuries ago, Bartholomew de Diaz sailed down the western coast of Africa, and penetrated to the Indian Sea; and that Vasco de Gama, some years afterwards, following in the wake of his adventurous predecessor, reached the shores of

The Cape of Good Hope

India itself. It was with this object that Columbus embarked on his memorable expedition; and, in Mr. Lowell's happy phrase, "seeking the back door of Asia, found himself knocking at the front door of America." Nothing is, indeed, more marvellous than that, only four centuries ago, the shape of Africa and the existence of America should have been absolutely unknown. There is, at least, a strong presumption that the Norwegians, 500 years before Columbus, had penetrated to Northern America.[1] Most commentators think that, twenty-one centuries before Bartholomew de Diaz, an Egyptian expedition, organised by Neco, circumnavigated Africa. But the discoveries of Neco, and the enterprise of the Norwegians, led to no practical results. The existence of a new world beyond the confines of the Western Ocean was ignored; the possibility of reaching India round the coast of Africa was forgotten.

The pecuniary gain to Europe, which resulted from the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, was enormous. Mun, in a tract published in 1621, estimated that pepper, which was worth 2½*d.* a lb. in India, was worth 2*s.* at Aleppo; that cloves, worth 9*d.* a lb. in India, were worth 4*s* 9*d.* in Aleppo, that the difference between the price of mace in these two places was 8*d.* and 4*s.* 9*d.*; of nutmegs 4*d.* and 2*s.* 4*d.*; of indigo 1*s* 2*d.* and 4*s.* 4*d*; and of raw silk, 8*s.* and 12*s.* So largely did the constant change of conveyance in the overland route enhance the value of each article.[2] The Portuguese, who had discovered the Cape, enjoyed, in the first instance, the advantages of the discovery. They persuaded the Pope to grant them a Bull, which gave them an exclusive right for ever to all the discoveries which they had either made or might make in the Indian Seas. Incredible as it may seem now, the mere issue of this Bull secured them a practical monopoly of the Indian trade for upwards of a century. But the cruelties of Philip of Spain taught another nation to question the power

[1] See the arguments concisely stated in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ad verb America

[2] M'Culloch's *Commercial Dictionary*, "East India Company."

which the Pope had thus claimed. The Dutch, the most enterprising sailors of the seventeenth century, raised their flag in the Indian Seas, and planted the colony of Cape Town in 1650. For a century and a half the settlement remained in their possession. In the great revolutionary war, however, it fell, as all the settlements of her enemies fell, into the hands of England; and, though it was surrendered to its old masters at the peace of Amiens, it was retaken in 1806, and has ever since remained in British hands.

The Australasian provinces in the one hemisphere, and Canada in the other, promise now to have the greatest future before them of any English speaking colonies. In 1816, however, Canada contained only a population of 462,250 souls: while, including convicts and free settlers, there were not 30,000 British persons in the whole of Australia. The West Indies and the East Indies were, at that time, the most important dependencies of England. The West Indies. West Indies were then both relatively and actually of much more importance to this country than they are now. The value of the entire British and Irish produce, exported in 1815, amounted to £49,653,245; and £7,218,057, or more than one-seventh, were taken by the British West Indies[1] The value of the exports had risen in 1873 to £255,164,603, and only £3,154,337 of this amount were sent to the West Indian Islands. The trade of the country had increased five-fold, but the trade of the West Indies had been reduced to one-half its previous proportions. There can, unhappily, be very little doubt as to the causes which produced the rise and fall of the West Indian Islands. Jamaica, the most important of these possessions, made little progress till the negroes of Hayti, animated by the tidings of distant revolution in France, threw off their allegiance to their white masters. The trade of Hayti was destroyed by the rebellion of the blacks; and the trade of Jamaica rose on its ruins. In 1772 Jamaica only exported 11,000 hogsheads of sugar. Her exports in the six

[1] M'Culloch's *Commercial Dict.*, under Importation and Exportation, and Colonies and Colony Trade.

years succeeding 1793 rose to 83,000 hogsheads, and in 1801 and 1802 to 143,000 hogsheads a year[1] The other islands shared the advantage which Jamaica thus gained.

The prosperity of the West India Islands rested, however, on an unfortunate basis. The vast majority of the population existed in a state of enforced servitude; and a small minority of whites had absolute disposal of the persons and the labour of their black servants. From the time of Elizabeth to the days of George III, a regular trade in slaves was actively conducted between Africa and the West Indies. Three hundred thousand slaves were exported from Africa during the last twenty years of the seventeenth century. Six hundred and ten thousand Africans were imported into Jamaica alone during the first eighty-six years of the eighteenth century. The horrible traffic was openly defended on plausible grounds. Slavery, it was said with truth, had always existed in Africa, the slave was, at least, as well off under a white master in the West Indies, as under a black master on his own continent. The produce of the West Indies, moreover, had beyond all question added to the comforts and conveniences of the civilised world; and their climate made the cultivation of the soil impracticable without the employment of compulsory negro labour No one denied that slavery was disfigured by the perpetration of many cruelties; or that the slave, in his passage from Africa, was occasionally subjected to horrid tortures. But these evils, it was asserted, were not irremediable. The traffic might be conducted in a humane manner; the slave owner might be compelled to treat his slaves humanely. A slave, in the West Indies, the property of a humane master, was at least as well off as a negro in Africa.[2]

Slavery

[1] M'Culloch's *Commercial Dict*, under Importation and Exportation, and Colonies and Colony Trade.

[2] Ibid, "Slaves and Slave Trade," Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 809. No one seems to have realised the cruelty of the trade. Mr. Lecky has recorded the ghastly fact that the vessel in which Hawkins commenced the trade was called "The Jesus."—*Hist. of England*, II. 12 Mr. Froude says of this voyage, Hawkins feared that some of his cargo might die. But (so

These were the excuses, by which the continuance of the slave trade was justified. But the real reason for continuing it was probably different. Men might agree or disagree as to the advantages or disadvantages of the traffic, but no reasonable man could doubt that the slaves represented a very considerable property. In 1833, when slavery was finally abolished in the British dominions, it was found that there were no fewer than 780,000 slaves; and it was estimated that the value of these slaves amounted to £45,000,000. It was one thing for a humane politician to regret the existence of a horrible trade: it was another to contemplate the destruction of £45,000,000 of property. Half a century of agitation was, in fact, barely sufficient to accomplish the reform. The successive steps, by which the slave trade was abolished, and slavery was destroyed, form some of the most striking features in English history. In 1783 or 1784 a Mr. Ramsay, who had been a surgeon on board a man-of-war commanded by Sir Charles Middleton, and who afterwards had settled at St. Kitts, and had, therefore, a considerable acquaintance with the subject, published a remarkable book on the cruelties of the slave trade. The book made some sensation, which would probably have soon subsided, if Lady Middleton had not suggested that the subject should be brought before Parliament. Sir Charles, to whom Lady Middleton naturally appealed, replied that he was no speaker; and it consequently became necessary to seek elsewhere for some assistance. There had lately been elected for the great county of Yorkshire a young man endowed with ability of the highest order; eloquent beyond almost all his contemporaries, and animated with a singular zeal for everything that might advance the honour of his God, or promote the welfare of the human family. William Wilberforce was born on August 24, 1759; the son of affluent parents, he enjoyed the advantage of a considerable fortune. At an early age he was

Wilberforce.

Hawkins added) Almighty God, who never suffers his elect to perish, sent a breeze in time.—*Hist. of England*, vol. v. p. 60. Newton, who, at one time of his life, commanded a slave vessel, says "he never knew sweeter or more frequent hours of divine communion than on his two last voyages to Guinea."—Goldwin Smith, *Life of Cowper*, p. 38.

elected, at the cost of £8000 or £9000, for Hull. At the same time he formed a firm and warm friendship for Pitt. In 1783 Pitt, Eliot, and he together made a tour in France; and the incidents of the tour cemented the friendship of the three friends. Soon after their return to England, the events occurred which led to the overthrow of the Coalition ministry and the accession of Pitt to power. Parliament was dissolved; and Wilberforce was elected for Yorkshire. The friend of the minister, the representative of the largest English county, gifted with extraordinary eloquence, the highest situations in the public service seemed to lie within his grasp After the session was over he took a tour on the Continent with Milner, the younger brother of his first schoolmaster. Milner, a low churchman, seriously inclined, frequently turned the conversation to religious subjects. Wilberforce was impressed with his friend's earnestness, and, though he had apparently led a very harmless life, was convinced of his own worthlessness. The whole object of his career was changed. He abandoned all the ambitious plans which he had previously formed, and devoted himself to the cause of Christianity and the reformation of society. His friends whispered that he was mad; but, though Wilberforce was singular in his opinions, there was nothing unsound in them. "If this is madness," said one of his mother's friends, "I hope he will bite us all."

Such was the man to whom Sir Charles and Lady Middleton appealed to bring the question of the slave trade before Parliament. A committee was formed in London, under the presidency of Granville Sharp, to raise funds and obtain information for the campaign. Sharp was an admirable leader in such a cause. He was the man who had obtained the first decision in 1772 under which slavery had been declared illegal in England. The London committee decided on collecting evidence to justify their appeal to Parliament; and they employed for this purpose a young man, Thomas Clarkson, who, two years previously, had gained a prize at Cambridge for an essay on the slave trade. He proved a zealous, though not always a discreet, agent, and succeeded in obtaining much valuable information.

Armed with Clarkson's facts, Wilberforce brought the question before the House. Pitt threw himself with warmth into his friend's cause; Fox agreed with Pitt in desiring abolition; Burke was its declared advocate; the majority both of the House and of the nation seemed in favour of the proposal. A bill regulating the number of slaves to be carried by each ship (one slave to each ton) received the royal assent in 1788. A motion for the complete abolition of the trade from January 1, 1796, was carried in 1792. Unfortunately for the success of the cause the French Revolution broke out. The blacks in St. Domingo revolted against their masters. Commotions were apprehended in the West India Islands. The cause of the slaves became associated in men's minds with the excesses of Jacobinism; and the opponents to abolition gathered fresh hopes from the excitement which was everywhere visible. The House of Commons refused to confirm its vote for gradual abolition. A new Parliament adopted the device of leaving the colonies to deal with the measure themselves. The British trade in slaves to foreign colonies was not suppressed till 1805. The British slave trade was not finally abolished till the commencement of 1807.

Throughout these years of disappointment and reverse Wilberforce steadily persevered in the cause which had become the business of his life. He had obtained the abolition of the British slave trade. During the next ten years he was continually urging other nations to follow the example of this country. In Europe, France, Denmark, Sweden, Holland; in North America, the United States; in South America, Venezuela, Buenos Ayrès, and Chili, all agreed, on the remonstrance of this country, to abolish the traffic in slaves.[1]

As a result of these exertions the trade in slaves, which had disgraced the world since the days of Elizabeth, was greatly checked. Slavery still continued to exist in the colonies of the British empire. The West Indies still continued to send

[1] Wilberforce, vol. i. pp. 54, 56, 58, 119, 144, 152, 166, 173, ii. 196.

slave-grown sugar to Europe. But the colonists were compelled to depend for their supply of labourers on negroes born in the colonies, and were no longer able to supplement their own supplies with importations from Africa. Two consequences, each beneficial to the cause of humanity, ensued. The cruelties of the middle passage were terminated. The slave himself became a more valuable article, and consequently was likely to obtain more lenient treatment than he had previously received. But the abolition of the traffic in slaves was doubly gratifying to the humanitarian because it pointed to the abolition, at no distant date, of slavery itself. Wilberforce had retired from public life long before this great end was accomplished. But he had the satisfaction of learning on his death-bed in 1833 that the labours of his life had been rewarded by a full success. The Parliament, which ultimately gave effect to his policy, testified its admiration of his earlier exertions by following him to the grave; and by placing in Westminster, among the great worthies of his country and of his generation, all that remained of the orator, the philanthropist, and the Christian.

East Indies

The English acquired a permanent footing in the New World before they succeeded in establishing themselves in India. For a whole century after the discovery of the Cape, the Portuguese enjoyed a monopoly of the Indian trade. The Pope's Bull saved them from the competition of any rival. During the sixteenth century, indeed, the sea captains of England made many attempts to secure for themselves some share of this trade. But they endeavoured to find a new route to India through the ice-bound seas in the North Pole. The dangers of the Arctic circle were smaller obstacles to these bold men than the thunders of an old bishop enthroned in a decaying city. The progress of the Reformation, however, placed a new interpretation on the decrees of the Church. Stephens, Drake, Cavendish, and Borroughs successively penetrated the Indian Seas, and carried the best carracks of Portugal into English ports. Their hardihood produced many imitators. At the close of the sixteenth century

a Company was established in London with the exclusive right to trade to India. But its progress was slow. Dutch and English, French and Portuguese, all contended for the great Indian trade. Exposed to jealousy at home, and hostility in the East, the Company displayed slight symptoms of its future fortunes.

In the meanwhile events were in progress, which were paving the way for the ultimate supremacy of an European power in India.

Towards the close of the fourteenth century the Mogul Tartars, under the conduct of Timur, swept like a destroying wave over the whole country. A century afterwards Baber completed what Timur had begun, and founded what is usually known as the Mogul empire. The empire enjoyed two centuries of predominance. Prosperity, however, led to indolence; indolence to carelessness Kouli Khan, Shah of Persia, invaded India in 1739, and gained an easy victory over Timur's effeminate successor. The victory of the Persians led to the disruption of the great Mogul empire. The soubadars, or officers of the empire, threw off their allegiance; and, struggling for their own independence, courted the assistance of the European strangers The disintegration of the Mogul empire was facilitating the rise of a new power. It was still uncertain where the nation would be found, whose subjects should succeed in rivalling Timur's exploits.

Four European nations enjoyed, at the time, the advantage of a foothold on Indian soil. The Portuguese retained possession of Calicut and other places, though their power was on the decline The Dutch conducted a profitable trade with their settlements on the shores of India, and with the islands in the Eastern Seas. The French had established a formidable position at Pondicherry. The English had formed a Presidency at Madras; they had purchased Calcutta; and they had obtained Bombay from Portugal as the dowry of Charles II.'s queen. Though, however, they already possessed the three towns, which were ultimately to become the seats of their government, their power was certainly not superior to that of

the French. Twice in the middle of the eighteenth century they attempted to take the position which the French had established at Pondicherry, and twice they were foiled. But the French were not the only enemies in India before whom the British had occasionally to retreat. In 1756 Suraj-u-Dowlah overthrew the English settlement at Calcutta, and subjected every inch of Bengal to native rule. Lawrence and Clive repaired our fortunes in Madras, and gave to England predominance in that Presidency. The genius of Clive avenged our misfortunes in Bengal, and his victory at Plassey gained for the East India Company a richer empire than Wolfe, two years afterwards, won for the crown at Quebec.

The career of conquest, which Clive thus commenced, was actively prosecuted by his successors, Warren Hastings, Cornwallis, and Wellesley. The Company gradually extended its dominion over the greater part of India. But its trade and its profits did not advance with its conquests. Its servants, indeed, continually returned home with large fortunes; but the shareholders were compelled to satisfy themselves with low dividends.

The abuses, which the administration of the Company permitted, attracted the attention of politicians to the anomalous character of its empire. Statesmen of all parties were satisfied that a Company, formed only for trading purposes, could not be allowed to exercise an independent and uncontrolled dominion over a vast and populous country. The Coalition ministry formed in 1783 endeavoured to transfer the whole government of India to commissioners to be appointed by the crown. The India Bill proved fatal to the Coalition ministry. Pitt, taking advantage of the experience of his opponents, succeeded with a milder proposal, and instituted a Board of Control. The scheme left the Company in the enjoyment of an exclusive trade and with the absolute regulation of all commercial matters; but it permitted a board, consisting of six members of the Privy Council, "to check, superintend, and control all acts, operations, and concerns, which in any wise related to the civil or military government

or revenues of the territories and possessions of the East India Company."[1]

For nearly thirty years after the passage of Pitt's India Bill, the East India Company retained the exclusive privilege of trading to India. But in 1814 the monopoly of the Company was partially terminated, and the Indian trade was, on certain conditions, thrown open to all British subjects. The Company in vain endeavoured to resist the change, by pleading that the habits and the poverty of the native Indians made it impossible to hope for any increase in the Indian trade. They succeeded in obtaining the evidence of the greatest authorities on Indian questions: Warren Hastings emerged from the retirement, in which he had passed the twenty preceding years of his life, to deny that "our export trade would be greatly furthered by opening the traffic with India to all who might desire to embark in it;" Sir John Malcolm was brought forward to declare that "the general population of India were not likely to become customers for European articles, because they did not possess the means to purchase them."[2] Parliament refused to listen to the claims of the Company, or to be guided by the advice of Indian officials. The result showed the wisdom of the decision, and the salutary effects of free trade. The trade with India was at once rapidly expanded. The destruction of the Company's monopoly and the beneficial influence of free trade increased our trade fourfold.[3]

At the close of the great war, then, Britain had possessions in every portion of the world; but the importance of the dependencies, which she had won, had hardly reconciled her to the secession of the magnificent colony, which she had lost. A little more than thirty years before the date at which this history opens the treaty had been signed which had recognised the independence of the American Republic. Men had hardly

[1] M'Culloch's *Commercial Dict.*; Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, Capper's *Three Presidencies of India.*

[2] Quoted in Yonge's *Life of Lord Liverpool*, pp 462 and 465.

[3] "The value of the merchandise exported from Great Britain to India, which amounted in 1814 to £870,177, amounted in 1819 to £3,052,741" House of Lords Committee, 1821, quoted by M'Culloch on East India Company.

ceased to regret that the generation which had won Canada in one hemisphere and India in the other, for the crown of England, had permitted a country, greater either than India or Canada, to be separated from the British empire. The victories of Clive and Wolfe had shed a new lustre on the shield of England, but its brightness had been obscured by the capitulations of Burgoyne and Cornwallis England has long forgotten the lamentations of such patriots as these Every wise Englishman, indeed, still laments the causes which drove America into revolt; but no wise man regrets that she should have won her independence. The United States, since their separation from the mother country, have increased in wealth, in population, and in resources, and the British have the satisfaction of knowing that the great transatlantic republic, whose prosperity is almost equal to their own, speak the same language, read the same literature, and claim the same origin as themselves.

Thirteen provinces revolted from their allegiance to the British crown in 1776. The thirteen States had a free population of 2,600,000 persons. Between 1776 and 1815 six more States were added to the Union, and the free population of the Republic had increased to 7,000,000. The trade of our former colony was rivalling that of our own, and British shipmasters were complaining that the Americans were depriving them of their business. Nor was it surprising that the mercantile marine of the United States should acquire importance amidst the exceptional circumstances under which the eighteenth century had closed and the nineteenth century had opened. Every other great nation was at war, and the country which alone enjoyed the blessings of peace obtained immunity for her traders. Neutrality, however, is a condition which it is difficult for either a nation or an individual to maintain. A man rarely possesses the affection of two friends who have quarrelled with one another, and, if he attempt to hold the scales evenly between them, he is proverbially liable to lose the friendship of both So is it with nations. When States are engaged in the difficulties of a close contest, they are apt

to regard with suspicion the attitude of an ally who regards the cause of their antagonists as favourably as their own. The suspicion too often ripens into hostility, and the neutral finds it necessary to draw the sword, in a quarrel which is not his own, for the sake of maintaining his own independence.

During the earlier years of the great revolutionary war, the neutrality of the United States was not seriously affected. The Americans gained, in some respects, from the dissensions of European nations, and their merchants obtained a large addition to their carrying trade. Towards the close of 1806, however, the progress of the war altered the conditions on which it had previously been conducted. Trafalgar made Great Britain mistress of the seas; Austerlitz and Jena made Napoleon master of the Continent. For fourteen years the two great rivals had been almost incessantly engaged in strife, and one had obtained virtual predominance on the land, the other on the ocean. Napoleon saw clearly that the resources, which had enabled Great Britain to carry on the contest, depended on her trade, and that the destruction of her commerce would lead to the collapse of his adversary. But how was the commerce of a nation to be destroyed by a ruler who had hardly a ship of war at his disposal? Buonaparte endeavoured to solve the question by declaring in his Berlin decree, at the end of 1806, all the ports of Great Britain in a state of blockade, and by forbidding the importation, into any port under his control, of the productions of either Great Britain or of her colonies. The British Government retaliated by declaring all the ports, either of France or of her allies, or from which the British flag was excluded, in an actual state of blockade, and by condemning all vessels trading to them as good and lawful prize, unless they had previously touched at a British port, and paid customs duties to the British crown. Napoleon, by the Milan decree, endeavoured to make this condition nugatory by declaring any neutral vessel, which had paid tax to the British Government, denationalised. The claims of the belligerents had thus virtually destroyed the carrying trade of America; and America avenged herself for the loss from

which she was suffering by closing her ports against the flags of the rival nations.

The state of things, which had thus arisen, was very memorable. The two chief belligerents had forbidden all neutral trade with their opponents. The chief neutral had excluded herself from all intercourse with the belligerents. There was, however, a wide distinction between the decrees which Napoleon issued. and the orders with which the British Government replied to them. Napoleon, powerless on the ocean, was incapable of enforcing his own commands; while Britain, as mistress of the seas, was able to carry out the decisions of her ministers. The British orders, which were enforced, became consequently much more offensive to the Americans than the French decrees, which were practically unexecuted; and the Government of the United States displayed an increasing readiness to quarrel with this country. It is not necessary to narrate the progress of the long diplomatic struggle which preceded the war of 1812; to describe the varied results of a war, in which both parties achieved some successes and sustained some reverses; or to detail the stipulations of the peace, with which hostilities were ultimately concluded at the close of 1814. These things properly refer to the history of a previous period.

Thus Britain, at the period at which this history opens, had just concluded a war with the greatest power on the Continent, and with the greatest power in the New World. The perseverance of her statesmen, the determination of her people, the genius of her commanders, the bravery of her troops, had made her the foremost nation in the world. Twenty years of almost continuous warfare had extended her empire; and had arrested neither the increase of her population, nor the growth of her trade. While the thoughts of statesmen were occupied with the changing aspects of the campaign, Watt was completing his steam-engine, Arkwright his water-frame, Crompton his mule, Cartwright his power-loom, Davy his safety-lamp; Telford was carrying roads through the most impenetrable parts of the country; Murdoch was turning night

into day by the invention of gas; Bell was launching the first British steamer, the *Comet*, on the Clyde; Rennie was throwing new and beautiful bridges across the Thames. Merchants and manufacturers were alike profiting from the inventions of these great men, and England was proving by her example that a free people could triumph over the greatest difficulties, and prosper in a state of war which apparently made all prosperity hopeless.

CHAPTER II.

SOCIETY IN ENGLAND IN 1815.

THERE is at the present time no town in either England or Wales which a man cannot reach in a twelve hours' journey from London. He may be whirled from the metropolis to York or from York to the metropolis in four hours. Two hundred years ago, a gentleman would have thought himself fortunate if he had been able to reach London from Northumberland in a week. A coach in 1706 undertook with the blessing of God to convey persons from London to York in four days. The facilities which roads and railways have afforded to travellers have indirectly led to an alteration in the composition of the House of Commons. Parliamentary reform might have been almost indefinitely delayed, if it had not been for Telford, Brindley, and Stephenson.

Effects of travelling on political life in England.

In the days when travelling was difficult and dangerous, the right of representation was of little value. A journey from London to Northumberland was a more hazardous operation than a journey to New York is now; and the burgesses, who were entitled to send members to Parliament, found it difficult to obtain persons who were willing to act as their representatives. It became necessary to adopt the practice of making some allowance to the people who were thus selected; and the borough member became in consequence a paid delegate, and not an unpaid representative. In such a state of things the privilege of representation was naturally of little value. Places, which had originally enjoyed the right of returning members, ceased to exercise it. Places, in which the Crown or some wealthy person had influence, were given the right,

and no one ever questioned the power of the Crown to grant it. The Tudor sovereigns created borough after borough; but the creations attracted no attention.

The great contest of the seventeenth century fundamentally altered the position of the House of Commons. By asserting its right to exercise a decisive control over the government of the country, the House established its position and its influence. Almost at the same time some progress was made towards better, cheaper, and quicker travelling. Parliament complained that country gentlemen were coming to London, instead of staying at home. They failed to observe that the causes, which were collecting all the country gentlemen into one centre, were contributing to increase the influence of the House of Commons. Yet there can hardly be a question that this was the case. The moment that it became the fashion for a country gentleman to spend a certain period of each year in London, all the apprehensions connected with the journey disappeared. No further difficulty was experienced in obtaining members for each borough, and a seat in Parliament became of value from the social influence and the position which it gave In the meanwhile other parts of England shared the increasing prosperity which was visible in the metropolis New centres of industry acquired fresh importance, while the old boroughs, in which the county families had met together, either ceased to grow, or began slowly to decay.

Population was slowly gravitating to particular centres; and the House of Commons, while the country was changing, suddenly resisted further changes in its constitution. Before the seventeenth century the constitution of the House of Commons had been constantly altered. Henry VIII. created seventeen new boroughs, Edward VI. fourteen new boroughs, Mary ten new boroughs, Elizabeth twenty-four new boroughs, and James I. four new boroughs. Charles II. gave members to Durham and Newark; but, with this exception, no new borough was created, either in England or Wales, from the death of James I. to the Reform Bill of 1832. The House of Commons, after

the Restoration, took the issue of writs into its own hands, and declined to recognise those which had been issued by the Crown.[1] The constitution of the House of Commons was thus stereotyped, for the first time in English history, at the time at which the population of England was being collected in fresh centres. The representation of the people was becoming more unequal, and no attempt to redress the inequalities was made.

At the period at which this history opens the House of Commons consisted of 658 members: 489 of these were returned by England, 100 by Ireland, 45 by Scotland, and 24 by Wales. The representation of England was more unequal than that of either of the other divisions of the kingdom. The ten southern counties of England contained a population of about 2,900,000 souls, and returned 237 members to Parliament. The thirty other counties of England contained a population of more than 8,350,000 souls, and returned 252 members to Parliament. A little more than a fourth of the population returned very nearly one-half of the whole of the English representatives. Scotland contained a population of nearly 2,000,000 persons, Cornwall contained rather more than a quarter of a million of people. Yet all Scotland returned only forty-five members, while the county of Cornwall returned forty-four. Representation then bore no proportion to population, and the population, as a matter of fact, had little or nothing to do with the representation It was stated in 1793 that the majority of the House of Commons was "elected by less than fifteen thousand electors" Seventy members were elected by thirty-four places, in which "it would be to trifle with patience to mention any number of voters whatever, the election being notoriously a mere matter of form." Ninety other members were elected for forty-six places, in none of which were there fifty voters. Thirty-seven other members were elected for nineteen places, in none of which were there one hundred voters. Fifty-two other members were elected

[1] Hansard's *Parl. Hist.*, vol. iv. pp 507-512.

by forty-six places, in none of which were there two hundred voters. Twenty other members were returned by Scotch counties, in none of which were there one hundred voters. Ten other members were returned by other Scotch counties, in none of which were there two hundred and fifty voters. Two hundred and ninety-four members,[1] being a majority of the entire House of Commons in 1793, were returned by constituencies none of which had two hundred and fifty, and in the great majority of which there were not one hundred voters. There were not four thousand electors in all Scotland.[2]

Fifteen thousand electors nominally returned a majority of the whole House of Commons in 1793. But the share, which these fifteen thousand individuals had in the election, was purely nominal. One hundred and seventy-two of the English and Welsh members were returned on the direct nomination of the Treasury or of individuals, and one hundred and thirty-seven other members owed their return to the influence either of the Treasury or of individuals. The forty-five Scotch members were nominated by thirty-five persons. Three hundred and fifty-four members were therefore returned on the recommendation of the Treasury or of some patron.[3] The union with Ireland, in 1801, added one hundred members to the roll of the House of Commons. But fifty-one of these were returned by thirty-six peers, and twenty by nineteen commoners.[4] The Union had increased the roll of the House to six hundred and fifty-eight; and four hundred and twenty-four of the six hundred and fifty-eight members were returned either on the nomination, or on the recommendation, of patrons.

The borough owners

At the commencement of every session, the House was

[1] The fifteen not specified in the text being returned by Scotch boroughs, with fewer than 125 electors each

[2] Petition of 1793; *Ann. Reg*, 1793, 83–103, 1821, p. 49; May's *Const. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 295.

[3] See again the Return of 1793.

[4] Oldfield's *Rep. Hist*, vol. vi. pp. 298, 299, May's *Const. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 300.

in the habit of resolving that "it is a high infringement upon the liberties and privileges of the Commons of Great Britain, for any Lord of Parliament, or any Lord-Lieutenant of a county, to concern themselves in the election of members to serve for the Commons in Parliament." Yet two hundred and forty-five members were notoriously returned by the influence of one hundred and twenty-eight peers.[1] Lord Lonsdale, from returning nine members, was commonly known as "the premier's cat-o'-nine-tails."[2] The Duke of Newcastle, Lord Buckingham, Lord Mount Edgecumbe, and Lord Eliot returned, in 1793, six members each. The Duke of Marlborough and Lord Fitzwilliam, five each. The Duke of Northumberland, the Duke of Bedford, the Duke of Rutland, Lord Ailesbury, and Lord Stafford, four each. The Duke of Beaufort, Lord Sandwich, Lord Foley, and Lord Uxbridge, three each. Such was the state of things in 1793. In the next few years some of the boroughs changed hands, but the system remained unaltered. Lord Lonsdale retained his "cat-o'-nine-tails;" the Duke of Newcastle, and Lord Buckingham, who had become a duke, their six members each. But other peers had, in the interval, extended their political influence by purchasing boroughs. Lord Darlington, in 1793, had only nominated one member for Winchelsea. He had since acquired the second seat in that borough, and had purchased Camelford, which had previously belonged to Sir Jonathan Phillips; and Ilchester, the property of Mr. Howard. He

[1] One hundred and sixty-three members in Great Britain by 71 peers, *Ann Reg.*, 1793, p 94, 31 in Scotland by 21 peers, and 51 members in Ireland by 36 peers. Oldfield, vol vi pp. 295–299. The statement in the text is the most moderate which can be given. Oldfield says that 371 of the English and Welsh members, the 45 Scotch members, and 71 Irish members, were all returned by nomination. See *Rep. Hist.*, vol. vi. pp 285–300. Some difference of opinion must naturally have arisen as to the influence of persons in some of the larger constituencies, and the safest course therefore seems to be to take the most moderate of the computations.

[2] Wilberforce, vol. i. p. 184, and Oldfield, vol. vi. p. 286. The *Ann Reg.*, 1793, p. 94, gives him only 7 members, 1 for Appleby, and 2 each for Cockermouth, Haslemere, and Westmoreland The two members for Carlisle, where Lord Lonsdale's influence was great, made the other two. See also *Black Book*, vol. vi. p. 648.

had now six seats at his disposal, and had been rewarded with a marquisate for his investment.[1] Lord Westminster had also six seats; Lord Hertford six; Lord Fitzwilliam five; the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Powis, and Lord St. Germans four. Lord Cleveland's marquisate was an ever-present proof of the prizes, which were ready for the fortunate borough owner; and peers who desired higher titles, and commoners thirsting for peerages, naturally concluded that their easiest road to success lay through the acquisition of a borough.[2]

The strength of the great political peers did not lie in the boroughs alone. Many of the English counties returned, as a matter of course, the nominees of the great landowners. It was a common saying, attributed to Fox, that Yorkshire and Middlesex between them made all England.[3] Yet, even in Yorkshire, the contest rather lay between the Lascelles and the Fitzwilliams than the aristocracy and the people. Up to 1780, the member for Yorkshire had always been elected in Lord Rockingham's dining-room.[4] If such was the state of things in Yorkshire, it is easy to imagine what occurred in less populous counties. A contested election in many counties was a rare occurrence. It was found in 1831 that there were no poll-books in Denbighshire. There had been no contest for a hundred years in Cheshire, in Nottinghamshire, and Cardiganshire. There had been no contest for nearly fifty years in Anglesey; and there had been no contest for twenty years in Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Monmouthshire, Radnorshire, Flintshire, and Rutland.[5]

County constituencies

The condition of the Scotch counties was even worse. In

[1] "He got his boroughs to be made a marquis, he got rid of them to be made a duke."—*Greville*, ii. 193. Oldfield gives him seven members.—*Rep. Hist*, vi. 287. There is a list of the Tory patrons and the number of members they returned in 1827 in *Croker's Memoirs*, vol. i p. 371.

[2] Parl Ret, 1793, and see *Black Book*, pp. 646–648. Oldfield, *Rep. Hist.*, vol. vi. p. 287, says that the Duke of Norfolk had 11 members, and the Duke of Newcastle 7.

[3] Wilberforce, vol. ii. p. 133.

[4] Ibid., vol. i. p. 57.

[5] *Black Book*, p 609.

England every forty-shilling freeholder was a voter. Manufacturers, large tenant farmers, opulent and important inhabitants, were excluded from the franchise unless they happened to possess a little land, but every landowner, not disqualified by religion, by age, or by sex, had a vote. But in Scotland, the landowners had nothing whatever to do with the representation. The franchise was invested in the owners of superiorities; and these superiorities had the entire representation in their hands. Any owner of a superiority, producing £400 a year, was entitled to a vote; and the superiorities were cut up into different parcels of four hundred a year each, for the sake of giving votes. The owner of the superiority, as the direct grant from the crown was called, had not necessarily any land in the county, he did not necessarily reside in it; yet no one except the owner of a superiority was allowed a vote. The whole number of county electors in Scotland was variously estimated at from 2500 to 2900 persons [1] Fife was said to contain 240 voters, Cromarty only nine! Scott mentions incidentally that young Harden was returned for Roxburghshire at the memorable election of 1831, by a "great majority of forty to nineteen!" [2] Yet Roxburgh had a population of more than 40,000 persons "The county of Bute, with a population of fourteen thousand, had twenty-one electors, of whom only one resided in the county." "At an election at Bute, not beyond the memory of man," said the Lord Advocate in 1831, "only one person attended the meeting, except the sheriff and the returning officer. He, of course, took the chair, constituted the meeting, called over the roll of freeholders, answered to his own name, took the vote as to the preses, and elected himself. He then moved and seconded his own nomination, put the question to the vote, and was unanimously returned." [3]

[1] Lord Cockburn, in *Life of Jeffrey*, vol i. p. 375, places the number at from 1500 to 2000, but his estimate seems to be too low.

[2] May, vol. i. p. 295, *Ann Reg.*, 1821, p. 49, Lord Russell, *Recollections and Suggestions*, p. 324, Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 725

[3] *Hansard*, vol. xii. p. 529, and May, vol. i p 297.

A different state of things prevailed in the Irish counties. In Ireland the right of election lay with the forty-shilling freeholders. But in Ireland gavelkind and cottier tenancy had multiplied small freeholds to an almost inconceivable extent, and had consequently placed the voting power of each county in the hands of a very large constituency. But, though Ireland had, in consequence, comparatively popular constituencies, the electors, chosen from the lowest and most dependent class of the population, were incapable of giving an independent vote. The persons, by whom their votes were directed, were either the great neighbouring landlord or the local priest. The former had the power of refusing them the extra plot of land, without which they could not hope to subsist; the latter could influence their superstitious imaginations with all the terrors of the Church of Rome.

Borough constituencies

It was, however, in the boroughs that the great governing families exercised their chief authority. The borough constituency varied in different places. In some boroughs in England and Wales, and in every borough in Scotland, the members were returned by the corporation. The corporations were, at that time, unreformed; they were usually self-elected; and the provisions of the Test Act effectually excluded all Roman Catholics from sitting upon them. In other places in England and Wales, the members were returned by the inhabitants paying scot and lot, or in other words by the ratepayers; while in other places the potwallers or potwallopers—or all the resident inhabitants, who paid for their own subsistence—had a vote. In some places, again, the franchise was divided among these various classes. This variety of franchise created almost endless confusion. "Your honourable house," said the petitioners of 1793, "is but too well acquainted with the tedious, intricate, and expensive scenes of litigation which have been brought before you, in attempting to settle the legal import of those numerous distinctions which perplex and confound the present rights of voting How many months of your valuable time have been wasted in listening to the wrangling of lawyers upon

the various species of burgagehold, leasehold, and freehold. How many committees have been occupied in investigating the nature of scot and lot, potwallers, commonalty, populacy, resiant inhabitants, and inhabitants at large. What labour and research have been employed in endeavouring to ascertain the legal claim of borough men, aldermen, portmen, select men, burgesses, and councilmen; and what confusion has arisen from the complicated operation of clashing charters, from freemen, resident and non-resident, and from the different modes of obtaining the freedom of corporations by birth, by servitude, by marriage, by redemption, by election, and by purchase."[1] Complicated, however, as these tenures were, there was one characteristic which was common to nearly all of them. The patron exercised an unbounded influence in the borough. In some cases the corporation, in other cases the inhabitants, in others, again, the ratepayers, nominally elected the members. Corporation, inhabitants, ratepayers, were all agreed in voting for the patron's nominee.

A few prominent examples will illustrate the position of the old boroughs. Lord Beverley's borough of Beeralston had only one house in it rated at over £10 a year; Mr. Bankes' borough of Corfe Castle was a cluster of cottages round a venerable ruin. Lord Calthorpe's borough of Bramber was an agricultural district inhabited by about 100 persons. Lord Monson's borough of Gatton was a gentleman's park. Lord Caledon's borough of Old Sarum was a green mound. Lord Huntingfield's borough of Dunwich had been submerged for centuries beneath the North Sea. There were thirteen electors in Malmesbury, none of whom could write.[2] The nineteen electors of Helston voted unanimously with the Duke of Leeds[3] There were 310 electors in Arundel, but 195 voted with the Duke of Norfolk.[4] At the general election of 1818 Lord Falmouth on the one side,

Close boroughs.

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1793, p. 85.
[2] Campbell, vol. i. p. 290.
[3] Colchester, vol. i. p. 59.
[4] Romilly, vol. iii. p. 75.

and the Regent on the other, made the utmost endeavour to carry Truro After a ruinous contest, Lord Falmouth's candidates polled twelve, the Regent's eleven votes.[1] These examples were, at the time, so notorious, that grave men thought that there was nothing ludicrous in gravely stating them. It seems hardly to have occurred to the politicians of that time that there was anything ridiculous in the mention of a contest between twelve electors on the one side and eleven on the other.

The borough owners disposed of their property in different ways. All of them acted on the blunt maxim which the Duke of Newcastle propounded in 1829—"Have I not the right to do what I like with my own?"[2] But, though they were probably unanimous in agreeing with the duke, they did not all carry out their theory in the same manner. Some borough owners simply sold their boroughs to the highest bidder. Ten thousand pounds was commonly offered for the two seats during a single Parliament.[3] Other borough owners again sold their seats, at a regular price, to members of their own party. Lord Mount Edgecumbe, for instance, used to receive £2000 from each of his candidates for Lostwithiel. Some portion of the £4000, which he thus received, was distributed by him as plate money to the twenty or thirty electors of the borough. Another portion was devoted to local objects and to subsidising the borough funds.[4] The residue found its way into the patron's pocket. Other borough owners placed their patronage at the disposal of their party,

Their sale.

[1] Colchester, vol iii. p 52

[2] The debate on the Duke of Newcastle's conduct at Newark will be found in *Hansard*, New Series, vol. xxii. p 1077 Sir W. Clinton, one of the members for Newark, had displeased the duke by voting contrary to his grace's wish in 1829 He was forced to resign The duke nominated a new candidate, Sadler, a gentleman who acquired considerable reputation, and Sergeant Wilde had the temerity to stand against his grace's nominee. Wilde polled 587 votes, but was unsuccessful. Every one of the 587 voters who voted for him, and who held land under the duke, received notice to quit. The duke was remonstrated with, and then wrote the historical question quoted in the text.

[3] Romilly, vol ii. p. 200.

[4] Private information.

or nominated their own relations or their own friends. An Act was, indeed, passed in 1809 to stop this traffic, but the traffic still continued. It was stated in a petition to the House of Commons in 1817 that seats were bought and sold like tickets in the opera.[1] The best men saw nothing disgraceful in breaking the law and in buying a seat. Romilly declared in 1805 that he had formed "an unalterable resolution never to come into Parliament," unless he held a public office, "but by a popular election or by paying the common price for" his seat.[2] Ricardo was nominated for Portarlington, in return for a loan of £40,000 or £50,000 with which he accommodated the patron of the borough.[3]

Promoted by increasing wealth.

The traffic in boroughs was indirectly promoted by the progress of the country during the eighteenth century. The conquest of India and the extraordinary impulse which was given to industrial enterprise created two new classes of wealthy persons. Men, who had gone out to the East with younger sons' fortunes, returned home as wealthy nabobs. Men, who had devoted themselves to industrial pursuits at home, amassed large sums of money as cotton spinners, as potters, or in pursuit of some other trade. Nabobs and merchants were both anxious to secure their own position in society and promote their own influence in politics; and social distinction and political influence could equally be gained by a seat in Parliament. The borough owners found, in consequence, that there were new classes of purchasers for their property with longer purses than the country gentlemen or the political managers who had previously been their chief supporters. The price of boroughs accordingly rose in the market, and the rise in their value made any reform of Parliament more difficult. It was hardly to be expected that a borough owner would readily consent to sacrifice a property, bought with his own money, which was worth, on an average, £2000 a year.

[1] *Hansard*, vol xxxv. p. 310.
[2] Romilly, vol. ii p. 118
[3] *Hansard*, 3rd Series, vol. iii. p. 201.

The whole of the boroughs, however, were not at the disposal of any patron. In some places the constituency was free to return a candidate of its own choice. A few of the largest towns really prided themselves on securing the success of what was called a popular candidate, but even these places were disgraced by scenes which seem now incredible. Lord J. Russell stated in the House of Commons in 1831 that if an intelligent foreigner were taken to a great and opulent town, Liverpool for instance, "he would see bribery prevail to the greatest extent: he would see men openly paid for their votes."[1] An election at Westminster involved a fortnight of riot and drunkenness. When Brougham stood for Liverpool it was recorded that two or three men were killed, but that the town was quiet.[2] A riot, in which only two or three men lost their lives, was thought hardly worth noticing. "By long established custom the single vote of a resident elector at Hull was rewarded with a donation of two guineas; four were paid for a plumper, and the expenses of a freeman's journey from London averaged £10 a piece. The letter of the law was not broken, because the money was not paid till the last day on which election petitions could be presented"[3] At Stafford £7 was given for a single vote, £14 for a plumper; to be paid for about a twelvemonth after the election.[4] "The price of votes (at Maidstone) was as regularly fixed as the price of bread—so much for a single vote and so much for a plumper'[5] There were about 240 electors at Abingdon, seventy of whom took money.[6] Lord Cochrane admitted in the House of Commons that, after his return for Honiton, he sent the town crier round the borough to tell the voters to go to the chief banker for £10, 10*s.* each.[7] In 1766, Sudbury shamelessly offered itself for sale.[8] In 1768, the corporation of Oxford sold the representation of the city to

Bribery.

[1] *Ann Reg*, 1831, p 7
[2] Brougham's *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 63.
[3] Wilberforce, vol. i p 16
[4] Campbell, i. 628
[5] Greville, vol iii p. 184.
[6] Colchester, vol. i p. 55.
[7] *Hansard*, 1st Series, xxxv. 92.
[8] Horace Walpole's *Memoirs of George III.*, vol. i. p 42.

the Duke of Marlborough and Lord Abingdon.[1] In 1826, the borough of Leicester spent £10,000 in securing the election of a political partisan.[2] "A gentleman from London," wrote Lord J. Russell, "goes down to a borough of which he scarcely before knew the existence. The electors do not ask his political opinions; they do not inquire into his private character; they only require to be satisfied of the impurity of his intentions. If he is elected, no one in all probability contests the validity of his return. His opponents are as guilty as he is, and no other person will incur the expense of a petition for the sake of a public benefit. Fifteen days after the meeting of Parliament, a handsome reward is distributed to each of the worthy and independent electors."[3] "I doubt not," wrote Wilberforce, "that the bribery of all sorts and forms, and the drunkenness, which attend our present system, are the evils which call by far the loudest for reform."

The bribery and drunkenness, which Wilberforce deplored, were encouraged by the law which protracted the taking of the poll. Rapid polling was indeed impossible. In 1807, for example, the poll clerk at Horsham had to take "down the description of every burgage tenement from the deeds of the voters." Only seventy-three electors were polled, but the complicated process occupied the greater part of two days.[4] It may easily be imagined that in larger constituencies a process of this kind must have taken not days but weeks; and the law allowed the poll to be open for weeks. At the general election of 1784 the contest for Westminster continued for upwards of six weeks, and was followed by a scrutiny which lasted for the best part of a year.[5] But the scandals connected with this election were too great even for the politicians of the eighteenth century. A law was passed "limiting every poll to fifteen days, and closing a scrutiny within thirty days

[1] Horace Walpole's *Memoirs of George III.*, vol. iii. p. 153.
[2] Report Municipal Commissioners, 1835, p. 45.
[3] *Life of Lord J. Russell*, vol. i. p. 130.
[4] Romilly, vol. ii. p. 202.
[5] *Ann. Reg.*, 1784-5, pp. 174-180.

after the close of the poll."[1] But this law, though it undoubtedly constituted a great reform, still permitted the most inordinate expenditure. In the great struggle in 1807, when Wilberforce, Lord Milton, and Lascelles were engaged in a triangular contest for the representation of Yorkshire, the poll was kept open for the full legal period of fifteen days, and Lord Milton and Lascelles spent between them £200,000.[2] The lavish expenditure, inseparable from a contested election in a popular constituency, increased the influence of a few territorial magnates. It was hardly worth any man's while to waste a fortune on a single contest; and the expense of a county election gave, therefore, a monopoly of the representation to a few great families. Expenses.

Bribery was indirectly encouraged by another circumstance. In theory everybody reprobated it; in practice everybody laughed at it. Up to 1770, election petitions were tried in the whole House, and the decision of the House was avowedly pronounced on party grounds, and had no reference to the merits of the case. Sir Robert Walpole was driven from office by an adverse vote on the Chippenham election petition. In 1770, George Grenville persuaded Parliament to adopt a little better system. Under the Grenville Act, a committee was appointed to try the election. Forty-nine members were chosen by ballot; each party to the petition had the right of objecting to eighteen of these names; the remaining thirteen, associated with two others, one of whom was nominated on either side of the House, constituted the tribunal to determine the election. The Grenville committees, as they were commonly called, were far better tribunals than the whole House for determining the legality of an election. But the Grenville committees were as much influenced as the House had been by party considerations.[3] In a committee of fifteen members one party or the other was necessarily in the Election Petitions.

[1] 25 Geo. III., c. 84, or, in the case of a general election, six days before the day on which the writ was returnable. May's *Const. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 293.

[2] Wilberforce, vol. iii. pp 330–337.

[3] May's *Par. Pract.*, pp. 600, 601.

majority, and the members usually voted with their political friends and disregarded their own conclusions. A tribunal of this description was not likely to stamp out bribery; and bribery consequently continued unchecked and unreproved.

At the time, then, at which this history commences, the constituencies were divisible into two classes—some places were notoriously corrupt; others were notoriously in the hands of the landed interest. The class which thus enjoyed a monopoly of political power obtained its full share of the good things of this world. A political career was indeed a lottery, but it was a lottery in which the prizes were very large, and in which even moderate success was rewarded with extravagant liberality. A successful politician could easily ensure his own affluence, and could usually obtain a comfortable provision for his children. Lord Grenville, on retiring in 1801, secured a pension of £1500 a year for Lady Grenville.[1] Yet Lord Grenville was auditor of the exchequer, a sinecure producing £4000 a year, and his younger brother, Thomas Grenville, received upwards of £2000 a year as one of the chief justices in eyre. The Duke of Portland succeeded Lord Grenville His son, Lord William Bentinck, received £1131 as clerk of the pipe in the exchequer, and £2511 as colonel of the 11th Dragoons. His son-in-law, Charles Greville, received £600 a year as controller of the excise; £350 a year as secretary of the Island of Tobago, and £572 a year as naval officer in Trinidad. His grandson, Charles Greville, whose memoirs have obtained for him a durable reputation, received £2000 a year as clerk of the council—an office which was bestowed on him in reversion—and £3000 a year as secretary to the government of Jamaica, though he never set foot in Jamaica in his life.[2] Lord Sidmouth was another ex-prime minister. His eldest son drew £3000 a year as clerk of the pells. Lord Liverpool enjoyed £3000 a year as lord warden of the Cinque Ports. Such were the rewards, which the four men had obtained, who had had the good fortune to preside over his

Pensions and sinecures.

[1] She resigned it in 1820. *Hansard*, New Series, vol. i p. 148

[2] Greville Memoirs. Confer *Hansard*, 3rd Series, vol. ii. p 91.

Majesty's Government. The great dignitaries of the law were even better paid than the highest officers in the State. Lord Eldon was chancellor. One of Lord Eldon's sons was a registrar of deeds for the West Riding, with £1200 a year; another of them received £2000 a year as receiver of fines and registrar of affidavits in the Court of Chancery. Lord Ellenborough was Chief Justice of the King's Bench; his eldest son drew very nearly £10,000 a year as chief clerk of that court. Lord Ellenborough's predecessor, Lord Kenyon, had made his eldest son custos brevium, with £2696, and a younger son drew more than £6000 a year in fees and compensation. Ten years before the great war began, Lord Thurlow had been Chancellor. Fifty years after Waterloo, his grandson still enjoyed about £11,000 a year as late patentee for the execution of the bankrupt laws, and clerk of the hanaper in Chancery.

These are a few instances of the extravagant provisions which successful politicians and successful lawyers were allowed to make for their posterity, or for themselves. It would be easy to extend the list to an almost indefinite length. It is difficult to define the duties of a teller of the exchequer, yet four tellers of the exchequer drew no less than £2600 a year each. No duties of special importance were attached to the registrarship of the Court of Admiralty; yet Lord Arden, the registrar, drew at least £10,000 a year. The chief clerkship of the House of Commons would have been adequately paid with £2000 a year; and the fees of the office amounted to six times that sum.[1] The fees of the clerk of the pleas in Ireland amounted to £10,000 a year; his deputy received no less than £7000, not one shilling of which, according to a high authority, was legal.[2] The Duke of Grafton, in addition to some hereditary pensions, received £2800 a year as sealer of the King's Bench and Common Pleas. Lord Melville enjoyed about the same sum, as keeper of the privy seal in Scotland. "The Countess of Mansfield," wrote the editor of the "Black

[1] Colchester, vol. i. p 482.

[2] Mr. L. Foster. Vide *Hansard*, vol. xxxiv. p. 8.

Book" in 1830, "receives £1000 a year from the Barbadoes planters, and the Duchess Dowager of Manchester £2928 a year as late collector of the customs outwards. Not long since a right honourable lady, a baroness, was sweeper of the Mall in the Park; another lady was chief usher in the Court of Exchequer."[1] "One of the four patentees" of the sinecure situation of "custos brevium," wrote Lord Colchester in his diary, "was a woman, a second a Catholic, the third a lunatic, the fourth an infant."[2] Lord Seaforth, though he had the misfortune to be deaf and dumb, was made governor of Barbadoes.[3] Lord Rosslyn, a general officer, was made director of Chancery in Scotland.[4]

Pensions and places were not the only rewards at the disposal of successful statesmen and successful lawyers. Peerages were granted with a prodigality which exceeds belief, and pensions were in their turn bestowed to support the peerages which had thus been created. "The far greater part of the peers," wrote Queen Caroline to George IV. in 1820, "hold by themselves and their families offices, pensions, and emoluments, solely at the will and pleasure of your Majesty. There are more than four-fifths of the peers in this situation!"[5] "More than half of the present House of Lords," said Wilberforce in 1811, "has been created or gifted with their titles since I came into Parliament in 1780."[6] "No great thinkers, no great writers, no great orators, no great statesmen, none of the true nobility of the land, were to be found among the spurious nobles created by George III." They chiefly consisted of "mere lawyers," and "country gentlemen remarkable for nothing but their wealth, and the number of votes their wealth enabled them to control"[7]

Peerages.

The system was productive of three mischievous consequences. Places, which were sinecures, were maintained for the purpose of enabling the minister to make a convenient

[1] *Black Book*, pp. 485 and 488.
[2] Colchester, vol. i. p. 143.
[3] Smiles *Industrial Biography*, p. 302.
[4] At a salary of £1800.
[5] Yonge's *Liverpool*, vol. iii. p. 102.
[6] Wilberforce, vol. iii. p. 531.
[7] *History of Civilisation*, vol. i. pp. 453, 454.

provision for himself, his family, or his adherents. Places, which had only nominal duties assigned to them, or which were really necessary, were overpaid in order that they might prove acceptable to their fortunate recipients; and offices were bestowed, not on the most deserving candidates, but on the friends and partisans of the minister. The whole parliamentary system moved on a hinge of corruption; and persons known to be interested in the expenditure of the State, could not be believed to be the disinterested advocates of economical administration. The poor man, without political influence, had little or no chance of promotion; and honours and rewards were reserved not for the meritorious but the wealthy. The wealthy had the means of securing political influence. The influential politician was generally able to obtain rank. Rank was regarded as an admirable qualification for any office. The highest and lowest situations were lavished upon peers and their relations; and nothing was beneath the dignity of even a duke, provided that an adequate salary was attached to it. Nor were the sinecures the only places which were filled by the great governing families. The working offices of the State were similarly occupied. Commissioners and their secretaries owed comparatively little to their abilities. Their success in life was usually due either to their position or their birth. When the French war broke out in 1793, it never occurred to George III. that the command of the English army should be entrusted to a competent general. The natural leader of the king's army seemed to the king to be the king's son. When the incompetency of the Duke of York necessitated his recall, the king could not imagine that any one else could be fit for the command except his own brother-in-law.[1] Rank, in short, was the passport to high office. Rank could be gained through political influence by any ambitious man, and the borough owners stuck accordingly to their privileges with a tenacity which withstood the onslaught of the reformers for forty years.

The evils of the system.

[1] See George III 's Letters to Pitt in Jesse, vol. iii. p. 210.

Rotten as the system was, deplorable as were its consequences, there were some compensating advantages connected with it.

The only advantages of the system.

Men cannot take part in the struggles of a political career without mixing in society; and men fail to attain distinction, either in politics or society, without ability, information, and education. The ruling classes were so assured of this that they uniformly gave a polite education to their sons; and men of quality thought it as necessary to be versed in certain accomplishments as to be well dressed, or to be able to shoot The ruling classes, moreover, conscious of their own inferiority in numbers, were ever on the lookout to recruit their party with any particularly promising young men. A youth, who had acquired a reputation at Oxford or Cambridge, was certain to be introduced to some of the Whig or Tory party managers, and had a good chance of being offered a seat in Parliament. Clever young men began their political careers at school or at college; and fathers, with clever boys, sent their sons to school and college, in the hope of their being introduced in consequence to some political patron.

There is no doubt that this state of things was productive of one great national benefit. The door of the House of Commons was not solely opened to the wealthy, it was always ready to admit conspicuous talent. Men did not postpone their entry into Parliament till the close of their career, when success in business had enabled them to accumulate a fortune. Politics were the profession of their lives; the House of Commons their office, not the mere haven to which they retired in their old age. The prizes of political life, too, were so great, that they drew away the talent from other professions. Had they lived in Italy, to use Canova's striking illustration, Pitt and Fox would have been artists, and England would have had no reason to deplore her inferiority in art.[1] A system, under which all the rising men of the day regarded politics as a profession, and under which politics were studied with exclusive attention, naturally tended to create states-

[1] Alison, vol i. p. 450, note.

manship. A rising young man became a member of the House of Commons as soon as he came of age. Lord Liverpool was elected for Appleby, Fox for Midhurst, Lord John Russell for Tavistock, before they were twenty-one years old.

England then derived from the system the solitary advantage of having statesmen trained from their boyhood for their work; the more ambitious youth were encouraged by it to work at school and college, from the knowledge that success at school and college might influence their whole career. A gentleman's education, indeed, was less complete than it is now. The boys at Eton, for instance, were taught almost exclusively Latin and Greek; and an Eton education was supposed to be the very best which a parent could give his son The Eton boy, on leaving school, could write Latin Elegiacs or Greek Iambics with admirable ease and grace; but he could not speak a word of any modern language except his own. He was perfectly acquainted with the great authors of the ancient world, but he had never read a line of Chaucer or Froissart. He had read the speeches of Cicero; but he hardly knew the name of Bolingbroke. He had studied the dialogues of Plato; but he was ignorant of the writings of Locke. He could discuss the campaigns of Hannibal or Julius Cæsar, but he could hardly repeat the names of Frederick the Great's battles. He regarded the Gracchi as patriots, but he had an obscure notion that Adam Smith was a dangerous character. He knew the boundaries of the Roman empire; he could not have repeated the names of the English colonies. Educational defects.

Incomplete as his education was, as far as it went it was admirable. The well educated man knew very little; but what he did know he knew very well. He had acquired very little serviceable information; but his mind was very well educated. Education is, after all, only the system under which the mind is trained. Men will perhaps always dispute whether physics or classics, mathematics or science, form the best subjects for training it. A man may bring his body into perfect condi-

tion by various kinds of exercise, and there is no reason for supposing that the mind may not be equally well trained by application to various kinds of studies. If, indeed, it were the object of school life to acquire a large stock of information, nothing could be worse than to devote the greater portion of school-time to the study of extinct and, so far as most men are concerned, useless languages. But ordinary men cannot acquire much information at school. They lay in their stores of knowledge when their education ceases; and, in this respect, our ancestors were certainly more advantageously situated than ourselves. In 1816, a man could not devote his whole time to reading novels, for the very good reason that there were only a few novels to be read. He was obliged, if he chose to read at all, to select books which on the whole were well worth reading. He read less than the modern Englishman, but the books which he did read were more useful to him. Educational institutions, however, were not free from the influence of the governing classes. Those who had the good fortune to be born in the purple were exempted at both Universities from the curriculum prescribed for ordinary students, and the visit of a monarch to a school was usually followed by the remission of a week's work. A whole term of academical study was dispensed with by the University of Oxford at the coronation of George IV. "To remit a part of education," wrote Ward to the Bishop of Llandaff, "as you would remit a punishment, to what century does such a notion belong? A new reign then is to be reckoned as a joyous event for felons and undergraduates." [1]

"The old English gentleman"

It was, however, only the exceptional young man, with more than the average of ability and ambition, who was well educated and well informed. The ordinary English gentleman, if he were an elder son, lived on his paternal acres; if he were a younger son, he lived on the family living, or went abroad to fight his country's battles. There were few professions which a gentleman could enter. A

[1] Ward's Correspondence with the Bishop of Llandaff, p. 249.

clever boy was sent to the Bar; a dull boy was driven into the Church; a spirited lad was destined for the Navy, or, if he had money or interest, for the Army. But, outside the Bar, the Army, the Navy, and the Church, there was nothing which a gentleman could do. The prizes of the civil service were political, and the lower ranks of the offices were, with few exceptions, hardly good enough for the sons of a country gentleman. No one above the rank of an agricultural labourer would have dreamed of emigrating; no one with any pretensions to noble blood would have thought of going into trade. A gentleman's son would have rather died a pauper than have become a wine-merchant.

The eldest son succeeded as a matter of course to the paternal acres. He usually had many good qualities; but he had equally many infirmities On the one hand, he was honest and honourable, kind to his tenants, and, after a fashion, to the poor. On the other hand, he still too frequently indulged in the sports, the language, and the habits which had been common among his forefathers. Men moving in high society could see a bull baited, a main of cocks fought, or the desperate struggles of the prize-fight, without losing caste. Men in good society were not ashamed to maintain that there was something peculiarly English in these brutal spectacles. The courage of the prize-fighter, the bull dog, and the cock, prompted men, so they thought, to noble deeds. After all, the prize-fighter's risk was smaller than that which was incurred by the duellist, and every gentleman was prepared at any moment to fight a duel. Duelling had probably its origin in that remote period when trial by combat was regarded with the solemnity of a judicial proceeding. It was sanctioned by the deeds of the knights errant and the hallowing reminiscences of the days of chivalry. Every one remembers the page in Brougham's life, in which he tells the story of his brother Peter's death in a duel. But plain men like Peter Brougham were not the only duellists. A man could hardly enter a public career without running the risk of fighting a duel. Pitt was prime minister of England,

Duels.

Tierney was temporarily leader of the Opposition, when they fought at Wimbledon. Canning and Castlereagh were two of the most prominent members of the Cabinet when they met in 1809. The wound which Canning received did not teach him discretion. On two subsequent occasions he was on the eve of fighting a duel. He challenged Burdett, and Burdett's explanation only averted a meeting. An appeal was made to the Speaker's authority to stop the possibility of a contest between Canning and Brougham. Brougham himself was challenged by Stapylton for some hasty words spoken in contesting Yorkshire in 1830 Twice, in 1815, Peel crossed to the Continent, in order that political adversaries might have an opportunity of fighting him.[1] In 1826 Beaumont and Lambton fought on Bamborough Sands in consequence of some expressions which Beaumont had used on the hustings at Alnwick. Wellington was prime minister of England when he challenged Lord Winchelsea in 1829. The Duke of Bedford and the Duke of Buckingham fought in Kensington Gardens in 1822.[2] Grattan was elected for Dublin in 1800, made a speech against the Union, and fought a duel on the same day. O'Connell had killed his man. A literary quarrel led to Sir A Boswell's death in a duel in 1822. Jeffrey, the editor of the "Edinburgh Review," was challenged by Moore the poet. Scott, in 1827, was prepared to meet an obscure French officer.[3]

Duels, however, frequent as they were, constituted only occasional events in a man's lifetime. Intemperance was the Englishman's everyday fault. Men, indeed, no longer got drunk at night as regularly as they went out hunting or shooting in the morning. But hard drinking was the vice of the nation from the highest to the lowest. To be drunk occasionally was no offence against good breeding.

Intemperance.

[1] Croker's *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 78. There is an interesting list of famous duels, including those of six prime ministers, in ibid ii. 407.

[2] There is a good story that a contemporary chronicler wrote of this duel in these words, "Their graces having arrived at a spot, where there was a notice 'Rubbish may be shot here,' alighted."

[3] *Ann. Reg.*, 1822, pp. 62, 82; 1826, p. 103. Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 665.

Some persons will recollect Scott's apology for a drunken clergyman: "The crime of drunkenness consists not in a man's being in that situation twice or thrice in his life, but in the constant and habitual practice of the vice; the distinction between 'ebrius' and 'ebriosus' being founded on common sense and recognised by law."[1] George IV., when Prince of Wales, invited the Duke of Norfolk to dinner for the express purpose of making him drunk. The Duke of York drank six bottles of claret at a sitting.[2] Claret, however, was only within the reach of dukes and spendthrifts. Taxation had raised its price and restricted its use.

> "Bold and erect the Caledonian stood,
> Old was his mutton, and his claret good;
> Let him drink port, the English statesman cried—
> He drank the poison, and his spirit died."[3]

So ran John Home's epigram.

> "Others had tasted claret till they now
> To humbler port would turn,"

wrote Crabbe in the "Borough."[4]

If drinking were too frequently the country gentleman's chief pastime at night, hunting and shooting were his chief occupation by day. Neither of these sports were indeed carried on under the conditions which have made them popular since. The land was not drained; the enclosures were small; they were separated by huge shores or fences which no horse could leap; and the coverts or woods were large and near each other. Except in a few counties, pace, in its modern sense, was impracticable, and men rode to hounds for the pleasure of seeing them work. The hare, which ran in a circle, became under these circumstances a more popular object of chase than the fox, which ran straight to the nearest covert, from which it taxed the skill of the huntsman

The Game Laws.

[1] Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 57. In *Waverley*, Bradwardine excuses Balmawhapple by the same distinction, ch. xii.

[2] Thackeray's *Four Georges*, pp. 197 and 199.

[3] "Port. Na! na! Ye maun leave port and punch to the like o' us. It's claret that's fit for ye lairds," says the Innkeeper in the *Antiquary*, ch. ii.

[4] *The Borough*, Letter VI.

to drive him. Shooting, too, was carried on with difficulty with the old flint locks and cumbersome guns of the day; and shooting, in the modern form of battues, was only beginning to be known. In 1827 Lord Eldon referred in the House of Lords to "the objectionable modern practice of collecting game in large quantities for the purpose of battues." "Every plantation," he said on another occasion, "was turned into a poultry-yard, and a sportsman was thought nothing of unless he could kill his thousand birds a day."[1] The Duke of Gloucester, in 1816, shot 254 head of game in one day at Mr. Coke's of Holkham,[2] and Greville has recorded in his diary a day's sport which would have done credit to these modern times of bloodshed.

The spirit of the old forest laws, which the Norman kings had introduced into England, still lingered in the statutes which Parliament had made for the preservation of game. No one, who was not a landowner, was allowed to kill game; no one was entitled to sell game. The common law distinctly recognised that game was the property of the landowner, *ratione soli*. But, "in limitation, and to a certain degree in derogation, of the common law, a variety of statutes subjected to penalties persons who, not having certain qualifications, shall, even upon their own land, kill any of those wild animals which come under the denomination of game" The qualification to kill game was confined by a statute of Charles II. to persons having lands of inheritance of £100 per annum, or leases of £150 (to which were added some other descriptions of personal qualifications), and persons not having such qualifications were not allowed to have or keep game dogs. In 1821 a farmer, renting about 500 acres of land, was fined for keeping a setter[3] In 1822 a farmer, coursing hares on his own land, with the permission of his own landlord, was summoned by the keeper of the adjoining landowner for doing so. The adjoining landowner in this particular instance was the

[1] Twiss' *Eldon*, vol. ii. p 540, vol. iii p. 4.
[2] *Ann. Reg*, 1816, p. 193.
[3] Ibid., 1822, Chron p. 8. The case, it is fair to add, was reversed on appeal.

Duke of Buckingham, and the farmer was convicted by the duke, in the duke's private house, at the instance of one of his keepers, and on the evidence of another of his keepers.[1] A statute of George II. (28 Geo. II., c. 12) enacted penalties against unqualified, and finally against qualified, persons who shall buy, sell, or offer to sell, any hare, pheasant, partridge, &c. Similar penalties were enacted against unqualified persons having game in their possession.[2] But legislation of this kind did not cease with the reign of George II. As late as 1816 an Act, passed without a single word of comment, punished with transportation for seven years any person who should be found by night in any open ground, having in his possession any net or engine for the purpose of taking or destroying any hare, rabbit, or other game. So carelessly was the Act drawn that the limits of night were fixed between October and March at from 8 P.M. to 7 A.M., so that, according to this law, even a qualified person, who went out before seven in the morning to shoot game, was liable to be transported as a felon.[3] It was not, however, likely that a qualified person would ever be subjected to these penalties. The law was made to repress poaching, and a poacher's life was regarded with about as much respect as a rabbit's. Spring guns were commonly set in every plantation. "The forest laws," Blackstone had written in the previous century, and the passage still remained true, "are now mitigated, and by degrees grown entirely obsolete; yet, from this root has sprung a bastard slip, known by the name of the game laws, now arrived to, and wantoning in, the highest vigour, both founded upon the same unreasonable notion of permanent property in wild creatures, and both productive of the same tyranny to the commons; but with this difference, that the forest laws established only one mighty hunter throughout the land; the game laws have raised a little Nimrod in every manor."[4]

[1] *Hansard*, N. S., vol. viii. p. 1292.
[2] Report of Select Committee of 1816, *Ann. Reg.*, vol. lviii. p. 443.
[3] Romilly, vol. iii. p. 275, *Hansard*, vol. xxxv. p. 339.
[4] Blackstone's *Commentaries*, b. iv. p. 416.

The severe laws, which Blackstone thus reprobated, might at least have been expected to have led to the effectual preservation of game. They did nothing of the kind. Neither the attitude of Parliament nor the decisions of the county magistrates could induce the people generally to regard poaching as a crime. It is incidentally stated in the "Black Book" that 12,805 persons were convicted of criminal offences in 1830, and that no less than 1987 of these convictions were for offences against the game laws[1] Though, too, it was illegal to sell game, it was notorious that game was sold by nearly every poulterer. Laws of the severest character had not even the negative merit of enforcing obedience by their severity.[2]

The game laws were maintained in the interest of a small body of persons. The incomes of these landowners were not so large as those which some of their descendants now enjoy. But some members of the upper classes had very considerable rent-rolls. The casual expressions of contemporary writers enable us to form a fair estimate of the cost of living at the commencement of the century. When the loyalty loan was proposed, Lord Colchester said that the outside expenses of the aristocracy were calculated at £6000 a year. Sheridan, some years afterwards, publicly declared that £2000 a year was, in his opinion, absolute poverty.[3] The ordinary country gentleman had probably a smaller income than that which Sheridan's extravagant disposition regarded as poverty. But, as a class, they were better off than they had ever been before. The war had laden England with heavy taxation, and the country gentlemen paid a share of the taxes; but the war, while it lasted,

[1] *Black Book*, p. 270.

[2] The sale of game was regulated by two Acts passed in the 5th of Anne and the 28th of George II. By the former of these Acts it was illegal for higglers, chapmen, carriers, innkeepers, and victuallers to sell game. By the latter, gamekeepers were prevented from selling game without the consent of their employers; and all persons, qualified or not, who sold game, were considered chapmen. When any game was found in the house of an unqualified person, it was considered as exposed for sale. See, inter alia, *Hansard*, vol. xxxv. p. 877.

[3] Colchester, vol. i. p. 36, Wilberforce, vol. iii. p. 26.

had increased their importance and swelled their rent-rolls. Parliament was a Parliament of landlords, and the welfare of the landed interest had for generations been the paramount interest of the legislature. If the price of corn fell, it was argued, land would be thrown out of cultivation, men would be thrown out of work, rents would fall, rates would rise, and speedy ruin would overtake the country. It became the object of legislation to keep up the price of corn by artificial means. The landed interest has had the credit of selfishly initiating this policy for its own purposes. But those, who have investigated the subject, are aware that this charge is unjust. The protection of corn was not originally demanded by the landowners: it was a concession made by them to the reasoning of the political arithmeticians of the day. At the close of the seventeenth century the economists were universally of opinion that the land should be protected; and Davenant and Mun are as much responsible for the system of protection as Adam Smith is entitled to the credit of having originated free trade.

Corn Laws.

It was the interest of the consumer that corn should be cheap; the landlord thought that it was his interest that it should not be too cheap. To absolutely prohibit the import of corn was equivalent to condemning the consumer, in bad seasons, to famine prices: to absolutely prohibit its export was equivalent to compelling the farmer, in good years, to submit to a price which he thought inadequate for his produce. The dilemma led to many remedies in former times. For nearly four centuries after the Conquest the export of corn was entirely prohibited. In the reign of Henry VI. the injustice which this law inflicted on the farmer was partially remedied. Corn was allowed to be exported when its average price was less than 6*s.* 8*d.* a quarter. Thirty years afterwards a further boon was afforded to the landed interest: the import of corn was prohibited till the price rose to 6*s.* 8*d.* a quarter. The alteration in the value of money necessitated changes in these figures. But the system still continued in force. In 1670, wheat was allowed to be exported when the price

was below 53*s.* 4*d.* When its price rose above 53*s.* 4*d.*, it was allowed to be imported on paying a duty of 8*s.* A further step, in the same direction, was taken after the Revolution of 1688. Wheat was still allowed to be sent abroad; and, when its price fell below 48*s.* a quarter, a bounty of 5*s.* was paid on its exportation.

The system, which was thus adopted, and which continued in force for eighty years, was avowedly designed for the encouragement of agriculture; and the advantage, which agriculturists derived from it, was very great. The farmer was protected from foreign competition till the price of grain rose to an unusual point; and he then competed on most favourable terms with the foreigner. If, on the contrary, the price of grain fell, he could always raise it artificially by sending it abroad. The Government paid him 5*s.* a quarter on its exportation. It is stated by M'Culloch that, during the ten years ending in 1751, no less than £1,515,000 were paid in bounties on the exportation of corn. But the bounties thus paid, must have formed only a portion of the charge which the policy imposed on the taxpayer. Government could not have annually paid a bounty on the export of some 600,000 quarters of corn, without concurrently raising the price of all corn. The taxpayer was taxed, the consumer was indirectly charged, for the sake of fostering and promoting the agricultural interest.

Lord North had the credit of adopting a wiser policy in 1773 The legislature, on his advice, decided that the bounty, paid on the export of corn, should cease, and that no corn should be exported when the price rose above 44*s.* When the price rose above 48*s.* foreign corn was allowed to be imported on paying a nominal duty of 6*d.* per quarter. The system, which was thus instituted, lasted for eighteen years, and was the nearest approach to free trade in corn which was made before 1846. The landowners, however, never tolerated the new law. A clamour was gradually raised against it; and to this clamour Pitt, in 1791, found it necessary to give way. By the Act, which was then passed, a bounty was paid on the exportation

of corn when its price was below 44*s.*; its exportation without a bounty was allowed up to 46*s.*; a prohibitory duty of 24*s.* 3*d.* was levied on the import of corn when its price was below 50*s.*; a duty of 2*s.* 6*d.* was charged when the price was above 50*s.* and below 54*s.*; and the nominal duty of 6*d.* ranged when the price was 54*s.* and upwards.

The system of 1791 lasted for only thirteen years. Six years after it was introduced the Bank suspended cash payments. The price of gold slowly rose; and the rise in the price of gold affected, in at least an equal degree, the price of every other commodity. Wheat rose in 1801 to the unprecedented price of £5, 19*s.* 6*d.*; and, except in 1803, its average price did not fall below 62*s.* a quarter for twenty years. It was evident that, if the system of 1791 were to be maintained, it was essential to alter the figures in the Act. The prohibitory duty, therefore, of 24*s.* 3*d.* on imports was extended to all corn imported when the price was below 63*s.*; the intermediate duty of 2*s.* 6*d.* was charged when the price ranged between 63*s.* and 66*s.*; while the nominal duty of 6*d.* a quarter was only charged when the price rose above 66*s.* But the landed interest were not satisfied with these concessions. The victories of 1813 promised a return of peace, the prospects of peace lowered the value of gold; and the fall in the price of gold affected the value of other commodities. The price of corn fell, and the landowners, alarmed for their rents, persuaded Lord Liverpool to prohibit the importation of all foreign corn when the price was below 80*s.* a quarter, and all colonial corn when the price was below 67*s.*[1]

> "For what were all these country patriots born?
> To hunt, and vote, and raise the price of corn."[2]

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[1] The whole subject of the corn laws is treated in a masterly manner by M'Culloch, from which the account in the text is in the main abridged. For the sake of brevity the price of wheat has alone been referred to in the text, and, whenever the word corn is used, it is intended to mean wheat. Other kinds of corn were dealt with on the same principles, but the prices of course varied. The averages, quoted in the text, are from M'Culloch's *Commercial Dict.* Porter gives them slightly differently, *Progress of the Nation*, p. 88.

[2] Byron, *The Age of Bronze*,

The high prices, which had been encouraged by the legislature, gave an extraordinary stimulus to agriculture. Up to 1760 only 244 enclosure bills had ever been passed. Six hundred and fifty additional bills were passed in the fourteen succeeding years. Eight hundred and ninety-four enclosure bills were therefore sanctioned before the passing of the Act of 1773. Seven hundred and five bills were passed from 1773 to 1792, or during the nineteen years when Lord North's Act continued in force. But the Act of 1791 immediately altered this state of things. A fresh stimulus was given to agricultural improvements, and in the nineteen years from 1792 to 1811, 1481 bills were passed. The artificial encouragement which protective legislation afforded to the landowner more than doubled the rate at which land had been previously enclosed. Rapid, however, as the process of enclosure had been, land continued to be reclaimed with the same extraordinary rapidity. "During the last ten years," said Brougham in 1816, enclosure bills to the amount of twelve hundred have been passed, and the number of acres thereby brought into cultivation has been estimated at two millions.[1]

Enclosure Bills.

Vast as was the area, which had been brought into cultivation since the accession of George III., it is probable that the improved system of agriculture had done more even than the reclamation of land to promote the production of the kingdom. "At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the agriculture of our country was still of the rudest

Agricultural improvements.

[1] *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ad verb. Agriculture, Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p 146, M'Culloch's *Dict.*, Corn Laws and Corn Trade; Brougham's *Speeches*, vol. i. p. 512. There is reason for saying that Brougham underestimated the matter. The enclosures are given by Porter in decades—

	Acres.
From 1760–1769	704,550
,, 1770–1779	1,207,800
,, 1780–1789	450,180
,, 1790–1799	858,270
,, 1800–1809	1,550,010
,, 1810–1820	1,560,990

Progress of the Nation, p. 154.

kind. With the exception of certain parts of England, the land was still for the most part unenclosed; the live stock of each township grazing together, and the arable land being occupied in common field or runrig" Successive crops of corn were grown until the land was exhausted; and its cultivators were compelled to leave it fallow till its properties were recruited by the action of the rain and of the atmosphere. The latter part of the eighteenth century "is memorable in our agricultural annals for the introduction of various important improvements. It was during this period that the genius of Bakewell produced such an important change in the character of our more important breeds of live stock. . . . A more rational system of cropping now began very generally to supersede the thriftless and barbarous practice of sowing successive crops of corn until the land was utterly exhausted, and then leaving it foul with weeds to recover its power by an indefinite period of rest. Green crops, such as turnips, clover, and rye-grass, began to be alternated with grain crops; and hence the name of alternate husbandry by which this system is generally known" The rotation of crops, which was thus commenced, in its ultimate effects doubled or even trebled the producing powers of land [1]

The vast additions made to the extent of land under cultivation, and the improvements in agriculture itself, had, of course, the effect of largely increasing the rent-roll of the landlords as a class. The rental of land in Scotland (where the improvements were greater), rose from £2,000,000 in 1795, to £5,278,000 in 1815.[2] The rental of land in England did not probably increase with equal rapidity. But, in some cases, the increase was very marked. "In the county of Essex, farms could be pointed out which were let, just before the war of the French Revolution, at less than 10*s.* an acre, and which rose rapidly during the progress of that contest until, in 1812, the rent paid for them was from 45*s.* to 50*s.* per acre. . . . In Berkshire and Wiltshire there

Rise of rents during the war.

[1] See the admirable and exhaustive article on Agriculture in the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. [2] Ibid., p. 301.

are farms which in 1790 were let at 14*s.* per acre, and which in 1810 produced to the landlord a rent of 70*s.*, being a five-fold advance." [1]

So prodigious an advance in the prosperity of the landed classes may be supposed to have raised their importance. But, great as had been the increase in their prosperity, their power had not increased with commensurate rapidity. There were, in fact, at this time three distinct influences which were slowly shaking the confidence of the landed interest in their own power. Up to the beginning of the present century, a country gentleman, when he travelled, travelled uniformly alone. If he were wealthy he used his carriage; if he were poor he rode on horseback. But, with improved roads and increased facilities for travelling, the country gentleman no longer travelled alone. The coach conveyed him much more quickly, much more conveniently, much more cheaply, and much more safely, than his own horses; and the country gentleman consequently, like the rest of the world, travelled in the coach. In the coach he was brought face to face with classes with whom he had had no previous communication. He heard ideas expressed which he had never dreamed of, and he probably, before the end of his journey, found that there were gentlemen in the world better educated, better informed, and with fuller purses, than himself or his brother squires The coach, in fact, was a mighty leveller; but the coach did more than level. It introduced facilities for travelling, which had never previously existed, and, in consequence, encouraged large numbers of persons to travel. It was estimated in 1818 that "79,000 travellers were gratifying their desires by going abroad;" [2] and every one of these 79,000 persons probably had their minds enlarged by their experiences.[3] The country gentleman who

Declining influence of the landed classes.

[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p 151.

[2] Alison, vol. i p 340, cf. *Hansard*, vol. xxxviii. p. 437, where the number is given as 99,000.

[3] This travelling was the first cause of a new custom, or of the revival of an old one. Before the peace no English gentleman would have thought of letting his beard grow. After the peace men adopted the fashion of beards. Wilber-

went abroad discovered that other nations had their own good qualities, and that the world did not exist for the sake of the landed interest alone.

But there was a third cause which was probably more potent than either of the foregoing. A class, to be powerful or to hold its own, must give some evidence of its power. In previous generations the country gentlemen of England had produced some of the greatest names which are recorded in history. But the country gentlemen hardly held their own at the conclusion of the great war. Lord Eldon represented their feelings more accurately than any other statesman, and Lord Eldon was the son of a hoastman in Newcastle. Romilly and Whitbread were attacking their privileges and their system; and Romilly was the son of a London tradesman, Whitbread was a brewer. Lord Exmouth was gallantly winning new laurels for the British navy, and Lord Exmouth's father had commanded a Dover packet. Brindley was developing the country gentlemen's estates by showing them how to construct canals, and Brindley had been an ordinary mechanic. Telford was promoting their prosperity by forming roads, and Telford had begun life in a village school in Scotland. Davy was making it practicable to work their mines, and Davy had been a chemist's assistant. Lawrence was painting their portraits, and Lawrence was the son of a country innkeeper. Turner was enchanting them with his glorious landscapes, and Turner had commenced his career in a barber's shop. Chantrey was engaged on their monuments, and Chantrey had been a common carpenter. The success which these men had achieved was familiar to them all. But they had also heard how a poor weaver, Hargreaves, had invented the spinning-jenny, how a barber's assistant, Arkwright, had made a water-frame; how Watt, a mathematical instrument maker, had invented the steam-engine; and how Peel,

force, in 1815, records that he was introduced to the bearded Lord P., but found him, under this strange exterior, very mild and pleasing. Wilberforce, vol. iv. p. 279. The phrase implies that Wilberforce anticipated that a man with so strange an exterior as a beard could be neither mild nor pleasing. So curiously does custom prejudice the best of men.

a yeoman's son, had acquired a fortune in trade and received a baronetcy in recognition of his success. Had not this very Peel's eldest son beaten all their own sons at Oxford? Was he not now, humble as was his origin, the ablest subordinate in the Tory government, the hope of the Tory party? Nothing, to quote the trite proverb, succeeds like success. The country gentlemen were increasing their rent-rolls, but they were not extending their influence. New men, full of new ideas and new discoveries, were laying the foundations of a new England, and, in the sequel, were to sweep political power from the grasp of the landed interest.

But the country gentlemen, though their influence was on the wane, were still powerful. Freehold estates were not subject to simple contract debts. If a country gentleman were in debt his creditors could only obtain execution on half of the profits of his real property. If he died in debt, his real property passed to his heirs, and was not applicable to his creditors. A very distinguished man was endeavouring session after session to remedy this great abuse. Sir Samuel Romilly was the most remarkable of the small band of reformers living during the first twenty years of the nineteenth century. The honesty of his nature made him instinctively revolt from the notion that a man should be allowed to escape his creditors because he was a landowner, and he accordingly undertook, in the most favourable circumstances, to amend the law. He was himself Attorney-General, he had a right to rely on the active assistance of the Government; and the leader of the Opposition (Perceval) supported his measure. His bill passed through its earlier stages without encountering much opposition. But, before it reached the third reading, formidable perils awaited it. The Talents Government was breaking up; a Tory government was in process of formation; Romilly's own friends were occupied with their own resignations; Perceval was busily promoting the formation of a new ministry. No one, in these circumstances, thought it worth while to trouble himself about Romilly's bill, and the measure

Real property not applicable to debts.

was lost in a small house.[1] A few days after the bill was rejected, Romilly brought in a new bill for the same purpose, but confined to persons possessing real property who were in trade. The country gentlemen had no objection to make tradesmen pay their debts, and it was passed without any difficulty.[2] The larger proposal never became law during its author's lifetime. One great lawyer declared that the measure, if adopted, would annihilate small freeholds; another great lawyer spoke "with admiration of that regard which our ancient law had always had for landed property;" a third equally celebrated lawyer insisted that "such dangerous innovations tended to destroy the law of primogeniture, and to reduce all lands to gavelkind tenure;" and these arguments were held sufficient grounds for refusing an act of common honesty.[3]

In 1815 the Church of England retained the supremacy which it had long enjoyed. But the condition of the Church was in some respects similar to that of the laity. A few fortunate individuals enjoyed all the prizes; the mass of the clergy were in extreme poverty. In 1818 England and Wales was divided into 10,421 benefices.[4] Every incumbent was bound by law to reside on his own living for a certain number of months in each year. Yet 7358 incumbents were non resident in 1809, 5840 in 1810, and 6311 in 1811.[5] The abuse of non-residence had been largely increased by some recent legislation. Till the commencement of the nineteenth century, the clergy had been compelled by some old laws of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth to reside within their own parishes. "A clergyman living in the city was fined for residing beyond his parish, though there was no sufficient residence in it for his family and himself." The law was inelastic, and, like many inelastic laws, was harsh. The griev-

The Church.

[1] Romilly, vol. ii. p. 186. [2] Ibid., pp. 198 and 222.

[3] Ibid., vol. iii. p. 188. See also Lord Russell's *Recollections*, p. 28.

[4] *Ann. Reg.*, 1818, Chron., p. 32. The returns of 1827 (Parl. Paper, 471, Sess. 1830, *Black Book*, p. 37) mention 10,533 benefices. The number also varies slightly in the diocesan returns for 1809, 1810, and 1811.

[5] *Black Book*, p. 36.

ance was a real one, and required consideration. Sir William Scott, Lord Eldon's elder brother, succeeded in amending the law in 1802. The Act, which was then passed, continued to make residence the rule, but it gave the bishops a discretionary power of relaxing it. It removed the grievance of the clergy, but it transferred the grievance to the congregations. The provision that every clergyman should be compelled to reside for a certain number of months in each year within the limits of his parish had, to a certain extent, restricted the multiplication of pluralities. It had insured the presence of a resident clergyman in the majority of parishes. Under Sir William Scott's Act, however, a pliant bishop could be easily persuaded to exempt his clergy from the operation of the Act. In 1813 there were only forty-five resident incumbents on 140 livings in the diocese of Ely. There were seventeen other incumbents, who resided in the neighbourhood of their livings and performed their duty. Yet these livings embraced a population of upwards of 82,000 souls, and afforded an aggregate income of upwards of £60,000.[1]

Non-residence.

The gross abuse, to which Sir William Scott's Act had thus led, had been foreseen by its author. He had himself desired to supplement it with an enactment that the non resident clergyman should provide a curate in charge, with a suitable salary. Rarely has a moderate proposal excited so general a consternation. Every effort was made by the pluralists to defeat the measure, and Scott, who represented the University of Oxford, was compelled by his clerical constituents to withdraw it. Perceval, who at the time was Attorney-General in Pitt's second ministry, took up the bill which Scott had been compelled to drop. But, though he brought in the bill twice as Attorney-General, and subsequently as leader of the House of Commons, he was never able to carry it. The Whigs opposed it for party reasons. The bishops opposed it from selfish motives; and it was not till after Perceval's death in 1812

[1] See Mr Wright's Letter of Jan. 18, 1814, in the *Morning Chronicle*, quoted in *Black Book*, p. 35.

that Lord Harrowby succeeded in carrying it through Parliament.[1]

The evil of non-residence was not the only cancer which was eating into the fabric of the Church. The same evil which was visible in the public offices existed in the Church. Men received preferment neither from their abilities nor from their deserts, but through the interest of their friends. Paley was the ablest divine of his time. But no one ever dreamed of offering him a bishopric. "Paley is a great man," said George III.; "will never be a bishop—will never be a bishop."[2] The highest offices in the Church were given to the sons of great men, or to the tutors of great men. In 1815 the Archbishop of Canterbury was a grandson of the Duke of Rutland, the Archbishop of York a son of Lord Vernon; the Bishop of Winchester a son of Lord Guilford; the Prince Bishop of Durham a son of Lord Barrington; Lord Cornwallis was Bishop of Lichfield; the Bishop of Exeter was a son of Lord Chichester; the Bishop of Gloucester a brother of Lord Harrowby; the Bishop of Chester a brother of Lord Ellenborough; the Bishop of Sodor and Man a grandson of the Duke of Athol. Bathurst, the Bishop of Norwich, was half-uncle to Bragge Bathurst, Lord Sidmouth's brother-in-law. Lord Sidmouth had obtained for one of his tutors, Dr. Huntingford, the bishopric of Hereford; for another, Dr. Goodenough, the bishopric of Carlisle. The Duke of Rutland had obtained for one of his tutors, Dr. Watson, the bishopric of Llandaff, for another, Dr. Sparke, the see, first of Chester, then of Ely. Pitt's tutor, Tomline, was Bishop of Lincoln; Perceval's, Mansel, Bishop of Bristol. Fisher, Bishop of Salisbury, had been tutor to the Duke of

The Bishops.

[1] The debates on the bill will be found in *Hansard*, 1st Series, vol iv. p. 611; vol. v pp. 154, 737, vol. vi. pp. 741, 922, vol xi. pp 54, 833, 1114.

[2] Alison, vol. i. p. 444. Brougham said that George III. showed Pitt the passage, in which Paley justifies subscription to articles, not fully credited, on the ground of expediency. This, said the king, is my reason for not making him a bishop. But, Brougham added, I believe the true reason why George III. declined to make Paley a bishop was that he had compared the divine right of kings to the divine right of constables.—*Life of Buxton*, p. 206.

Kent; Howley, Bishop of London, had been regius professor of divinity at Oxford; Jackson, Bishop of Oxford, had been regius professor of Greek. Burgess, Bishop of St. David's, had been chaplain to Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham. Majendie, Bishop of Bangor, had been the king's neighbour at Kew. The list exhausts twenty-one out of the twenty-six prelates living in 1815. It is probably possible to extend it still further. But, as it stands, it sufficiently reveals the state of the Church. Birth, interest, and scholarship the sole passports to the bench. The ordinary parish clergyman, who stayed at home and attended to his duties, with little or no chance of ecclesiastical advancement!

A bench of bishops thus constituted was more likely to attend to their own interests than to the affairs of the Church.

Abuses of ecclesiastical patronage.

When Wilberforce moved for the promotion of Christianity in India, he complained that the bishops, as a body, gave him no support.[1] The bishops were too much occupied in attending to the interests of their children, to think of such distant subjects as Christianity in India. Archbishop Sutton was a very good man; he made an estimable primate; and there is no reason to suppose that he abused the patronage at his disposal more than the rest of his contemporaries. But, wrote the editor of the "Black Book," "the late Archbishop Sutton is an eminent instance of the perversion of ecclesiastical patronage. The Suttons remaining in the Church are very numerous; among seven of them are shared sixteen rectories, vicarages, and chapelries, besides preacherships and dignities in cathedrals. Of the eleven daughters[2] of the archbishop, several had the prudence to marry men in holy orders. Hugh Percy, son of the Earl of Beverley, married one daughter, and, in the course of about as many years, was portioned off with eight different preferments, estimated to be worth about £10,000 per annum. Another daughter married the Rev. James Croft, who is

[1] Wilberforce, vol. ii. p. 28.

[2] The editor has slightly coloured his story. Archbishop Sutton left nine daughters, three of whom were married to clergymen.

archdeacon of Canterbury, prebendary of Canterbury, curate of Hythe, rector of Cliffe at Hone—all preferments in the gift of the archbishop." Pitt's tutor, Tomline, made Archbishop Sutton's conduct appear moderate. One of his sons, G. T. Pretyman, became chancellor and canon residentiary of Lincoln, prebendary of Winchester, rector of St. Giles Chalfont, rector of Wheat-Hampstead, rector of Harpenden. Another son, Richard Pretyman, became precentor and canon residentiary of Lincoln, rector of Middleton-Stoney, rector of Walgrave, vicar of Hannington, and rector of Wroughton. A third son, John Pretyman, became prebendary of Lincoln, rector of Sherrington, rector of Winwick. Bishop Sparke had an equally keen eye for his children's interests. His eldest son, the Rev. J Henry Sparke, became incumbent of Leverington, rector of Littlebury, incumbent of Bexwell, prebendary of Ely, steward of the bishop's manorial courts, and chancellor of the diocese. His preferments were estimated to be worth £4500 a year. His youngest son, the Rev. Edward Sparke, succeeded to the consolidated livings of St. Mary and St. Nicholas Feltwell, the vicarage of Littleport, and a prebendal stall in Ely. He was also registrar of the diocese and examining chaplain to his father. His various appointments were worth £4000 a year. Finally, the bishop's son in law, the Rev. Hendry Fardell, succeeded to the living of Waterbeach, the vicarage of Wisbech, and a prebendal stall in Ely. His preferments were worth £3700 a year.[1] A minor canon, without preferment, preaching before the bishop in the cathedral, is said to have taken for his text the verse from Job, "Man is born unto trouble, as the *Sparkes* fly upward."

Pluralities, however, were not enjoyed by bishops' sons alone. It is said that Majendie, Bishop of Bangor, held no fewer than eleven parochial preferments.[2] Mr. Wright, in his letters to the *Morning Chronicle*, in 1814, undertook to prove that, "in one diocese there are about two hundred and sixteen clergymen who each hold two livings; forty who hold

[1] *Black Book*, vol. vi. pp. 25-27. [2] Ibid., p. 31.

three each; thirteen who hold four each; one who holds five; one who holds six, besides dignities and offices"[1]

Such a system could not work well. When benefices were popularly supposed to be the means of providing for a near relation; when the greater part of the emoluments attached to a living were diverted into another parish to support a non-resident clergyman; the clergy could not be expected to entertain any very exalted notions of the duties of their profession. Good men, no doubt, there were in abundance. Gentlemen struggling on a scanty salary to provide for the spiritual and temporal wants of the people entrusted to their care. Gentlemen providing out of their wealth vast sums for charitable purposes. But the ordinary clergyman had no such disposition. He was usually a sportsman, and, during six out of the seven days of the week, he passed his time hunting, shooting, or fishing. He was generally not merely a sportsman, but a very keen one. The country squires had other duties to attend to; the country clergyman had nothing to do but shoot or fish. He was frequently the hardest rider, the best shot, and the keenest fisherman in the parish. Nothing interfered with his sport except an occasional funeral; and he left the field or the covert, and read the funeral service with his white surplice barely concealing his shooting or hunting dress. The people were so accustomed to conduct of this kind that they saw nothing indecent in it. All that they expected of their clergyman was that he should read service and preach on Sundays, and that he should perform the occasional functions, which he was required to discharge, on week-days. The rest of his time was at his own disposal; and there was nothing in the public opinion of the day which prevented him from spending it in the same way as his squire.

The country clergymen.

The picture may seem overdrawn; but it was painted in even stronger colours by a contemporary artist. Crabbe described the parish priest, in the "Village," as—

[1] *Black Book*, pp. 31 and 36.

"A jovial youth, who thinks his Sunday task
As much as God or man can fairly ask
The rest he gives to loves and labours light,
To fields the morning, and to feasts the night.
None better skilled the noisy pack to guide,
To urge their chase, to cheer them or to chide.
A sportsman keen, he shoots through half the day,
And, skilled at whist, devotes the night to play."[1]

Crabbe, indeed, after he had himself taken orders, naturally drew the clergy in more pleasing colours. The vicar in the "Borough" is a much more estimable character than the jovial youth in the "Village." Old Dibble, the sexton in the "Parish Register," moreover, gives an account of all the clergymen whom he had remembered, and it is fair to add that there was not a sportsman among them. "Addle," the first, was a sleepy old don; "Peele," the second, screwed up the tithes; Grandspear, the third, was liberal and rich; the fourth was an author; the fifth a consumptive young gentleman from Cambridge. The reader infers that the village was in private patronage; the parish a college living

If the bishops did little to improve the position of the clergy, their influence was at any rate sufficient to maintain the supremacy of the Church Since the days of Charles II. no one had been eligible for a seat in Parliament, or for any office either in the State or a Municipality, who did not first receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and take the oaths of allegiance, supremacy, and abjuration. The Test Act, which excluded Nonconformists from offices in the State, had originally been framed to deprive the Roman Catholics of power But its effect had been wider than its originators had intended. It had been designed to exclude the Roman Catholics from all authority. It had the effect of disabling all Protestant dissenters from legally holding office in the government of the country. Even those scrupulous individuals, who were ready to admit the doctrines of the

Church supremacy.

[1] Arthur Young said he had heard of an advertisement, "Wanted a curacy in a good sporting country, where the duty is light, and the neighbourhood convivial."—*Tour in France*, p. 327.

Church, but who had conscientious objections to taking an oath, were excluded from office by this unjust law. The whole system of government turned on the supremacy of the Church; and no one was allowed to have any practical influence in the affairs of the State except a churchman.

The supremacy, which the Church had thus obtained, was felt in almost every sphere of life. The dissenter had to pay rates for the repair of the parish church; he had to register his place of worship with the archbishop or bishop of the diocese. Marriage was a religious ceremony which, except in the case of the Quaker or of the Jew, could be performed only by a clergyman of the Church of England. No funeral service, except that prescribed by the Church, could be read over the dead; the Church service was confined to those who had been baptized in the Church of England. A Roman Catholic or a dissenter could not graduate at an English University. The University of Oxford exacted a religious test on matriculation. All the great charitable endowments for educational purposes were under the control of clergymen. No one but a churchman could easily obtain an education for his children; no one but a churchman could hope for advancement in the public service. The highest legal authority of the day was of opinion that it was penal to deny the doctrine of the Trinity.[1]

Such was the state of the Church in England at the period at which this history commences. The supremacy of one persuasion had a natural effect. A few old families were hereditary Roman Catholics. A considerable minority among the poorer classes were dissenters. But most members of the community embraced the one creed which gave them their full rights as citizens. Every man who had ambition to satisfy, or children to provide for, adopted the only religion which enabled him to gratify his own wishes, or give his sons a chance. It was the clear interest of all persons to be churchmen; it was "ungentlemanlike" to be a dissenter. Such was the state of things in England. But in Ireland the result was different.

[1] Twiss' *Eldon*, vol. ii. p. 513.

There, the supremacy of the Church was regarded as the mark of foreign conquest. There, the great majority of the population were devout Roman Catholics. There, public opinion despised the Protestant minority and ranged itself under the banners of the Church of Rome. The time was fast approaching when the discontent, which was in consequence produced, was to destroy the supremacy to which statesmen still clung. It will, however, be more convenient to defer to a future chapter the further consideration of the effects which the supremacy of the Protestant Church were producing in Ireland.

The country gentlemen, it has already been shown, had benefited from the rise in the price of corn; rents had risen, and their incomes had in consequence increased. The clergy had shared in the gain which had thus been obtained. They were dependent to a great extent on tithes, and the value of the tithe—the tenth of the produce—rose of course with the value of the produce. The great proportion of the population, however, had no interest either in rents or tithes. They were dependent for their bread on their labour; and, as the price of bread continually rose, and the value of their labour did not rise in a corresponding degree, they were perpetually becoming more and more impoverished. Skilled artisans at the commencement of the present century might have earned their thirty shillings a week; but an ordinary day labourer usually received nine or ten shillings. Occasionally, indeed, wages sank to a lower level. Harvest wages in 1798 in North Wales were only 1*s.* or 14*d.* a day. The amount was miserably insufficient, when the price of wheat had averaged, as it had before 1800, less than 60*s.* a quarter. But the price of wheat rose in 1800 to 113*s.* 10*d.*; in 1802 to 119*s.* 6*d.*; and, though it fell in succeeding years, and only averaged about 60*s.* in 1803 and 1804, it rose again to 126*s.* in 1812.[1] The high price was hardly more serious to the labourer than the variations in price. Bread formed his chief food, and in one year the quartern loaf was purchasable for 9*d.*, in another it

Wages

[1] See the Tables in M'Culloch's *Dict.*, sub verb. Corn Laws.

could not be obtained for less than 1*s.* 6*d.*[1] How could any man, much less an uneducated man, provide against fluctuations of this description, occurring without warning, and through no fault of his own? Nothing but an increased wage for his labour could have served the labourer; and, unfortunately, the increase in the price of corn tended to make the wage-rate decline. "I wished," said a landowner to a Committee of the House of Lords in 1814, "to enclose a farm at the latter end of the year 1812 or the beginning of 1813 I sent for my bailiff and told him that I had enclosed, about twenty-five years ago, a good deal of land; that the enclosure at that time cost me 3*s.* per ell; that a neighbour of mine, two or three years ago, had made similar enclosures, which cost him 5*s.* per ell; that I thought he had paid too much, and that I ought to do it cheaper. The answer I got from my bailiff was that provisions were very high, that the labourers were doing double work, and that, of course, there was less demand for labour, and that he could do these enclosures last year at a cheaper rate than I had ever done them; and he actually executed this enclosure at about 2*s.* 6*d.* per ell. He requested that I would allow him to do it that season as he could do it so much cheaper, and that a great many labourers were idle from having little work, in consequence of those employed doing double work. I desired him to go on with other labour likewise, and he actually contracted for very large ditches at 6*d.* an ell, which I do not think I could do now under from 1*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d*, in consequence of the fall in provisions."[2] The most frightful distress was, in consequence, almost universally prevalent.

Distress.

"The state of the poor in Bethnal Green," to quote the words of Mr. King, the rector of that parish in 1816, "is truly wretched; the house is overflowing with poor. I believe that they are at this time crowded together in beds, and that there are as many as six or seven in a bed. The men and women are in separate wards, that is the only distinction

[1] This was about the average price. The quartern loaf rose in 1801 to 1*s* 10½*d*.

[2] See the evidence quoted in Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 455.

which can be made. The master of the workhouse has declared to me that the house is not capable of containing more than 350, but I believe at the present moment there are 700."[1] "My views of the state of England," wrote Lord Grey in 1819, "are more and more gloomy. Everything is tending, and has for some time been tending, to a complete separation between the higher and lower orders of society, a state of things which can only end in the destruction of liberty, or in a convulsion which may too probably produce the same result."[2]

"No—in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be,
As in England now we see,"

wrote Shelley in the same year. "I have traversed the seat of war in the Peninsula; I have been in some of the most oppressed provinces of Turkey; but never, under the most despotic of infidel governments, have I beheld such squalid wretchedness as I have seen, since my return, in the heart of a Christian country," said Byron in the House of Lords in 1812.

The distress, which thus prevailed, was no doubt enhanced by the artificial addition made to the price of corn from the existence of the corn laws. But it originated in other causes. For nearly three centuries a law, humane in its origin, but abused in its administration, had compelled every parish to provide for the maintenance of its infirm poor, and to put "to work all persons using no ordinary and daily trade in life to get their living by." Had this law been wisely and humanely carried out, the best results would have ensued from it. But the poorhouse, in which the permanent paupers were crowded, was unsuited for its purpose. No attempt was made to classify the inmates, or to provide the commonest appliances for ensuring health, warmth, or decency. The Poor Laws

"Theirs is yon house, that holds the parish poor,
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;

[1] Rev. Joshua King's evidence; Report on Police of Metropolis, 1816, p. 155.

[2] Brougham's *Memoirs*, vol. ii. p. 342.

There, where the putrid vapours flagging play,
And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day,
. . . . . .
Such is that room which one rude beam divides,
And naked rafters form the sloping sides:
Where the vile bands that bind the thatch are seen,
And lath and mud are all that lie between,
Save one dull pane, that coarsely patched gives way
To the rude tempest, yet excludes the day."[1]

Shocked at the discomfort, to which the poor were subjected in the poorhouse, Parliament in 1796 sanctioned the relief of the poor in their own houses. But this measure had the effect of terminating any precautions previously taken to check the growth of pauperism. Thenceforward, pauperism was created by the most indiscriminate and lavish grants of outdoor relief. The administrators of the poor law were employers of labour. Their chief object in administering the law was to reduce the price of labour, and their whole efforts were, intentionally or unintentionally, directed to this end. Wages, being reduced to the minimum at which life could be supported under any circumstances, were supplemented in years of distress, or in the case of large families, by outdoor relief. A large family seemed, in consequence, an object to every working man, and the prudential considerations, which might have induced the poor to abstain from matrimony, were removed. "Under such a system a labourer in an agricultural district was inevitably rendered a pauper; he was deprived of all means for exercising the virtue of prudence, and became almost necessarily improvident; he was brought to look upon the parish allowance as his freehold . . . and at seasons, when it no longer suited the farmer to give employment, the whole labouring part of the population might be, and often was, thrown upon the rates."[2]

"Our poor how feed we? to the most we give
A weekly dole."[3]

The extravagance which was one result of this system was only one of the evils which was occasioned by it. During the reign

[1] Crabbe's *Village*, Book I. [2] Porter's *Progress*, pp. 90, 91.
[3] Crabbe's *Borough*, Letter xviii.

of George II., "the amount raised within the year of poor rates and county rates in England and Wales was only £730,000. In 1775 the amount was more than doubled, having been £1,720,000, of which sum rather more than a million and a half was expended for the relief of the poor. The War of American Independence . . . crippled the resources of the people and aggravated the distresses of the poor. From that time to the close of the last French war in 1814, the sums levied in poor rates were in a state of continued progression. The average sum expended for the relief of the poor in the three years from 1812–13 to 1814–15 amounted to £6,123,177." [1] It was incidentally stated in the House of Commons in 1828 that there were 1,040,000 persons in receipt of relief in 1801, 1 340,000 in 1811; and, 1,500,000 in 1821. It was estimated that the number had risen to 1,700,000 in 1826; and 1,850,000 in 1827.[2]

The burden, which had thus been rapidly thrown on the rates, was so vast that the ratepayers naturally endeavoured to relieve themselves as far as possible from its pressure. No one parish, indeed, had machinery at its disposal for reducing the aggregate weight of pauperism, but every parish endeavoured to shift as much of the burden as possible on to its neighbour. The burden, so it seemed to the narrow understanding of the country vestrymen, could be most easily shifted off their own shoulders by enforcing the law of settlement. No provision was made, in the reign of Elizabeth, when the poor laws were originally instituted, for ascertaining the place of settlement of the indigent poor. The great principles, which Parliament then laid down, were that the lame, the impotent, the old, and the blind should receive necessary relief, and that the idle and the vagabond should be set to work. It was not till after the Restoration that a settlement was first thought of. The reign of Charles II. will be always memorable for the selfish legislation passed in it. It was in the reign of Charles II. that protection first became a reality; it was in the reign of Charles

Settlement.

[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 86.

[2] *Hansard*, New Series, vol. xviii. p. 1527.

II. that the navigation laws were re-enacted; it was in the reign of Charles II. that a Parliament of landlords replaced their own feudal burdens with an excise; it was in the reign of Charles II. that religious disabilities were introduced; it was in the reign of Charles II. that the poor were for the first time settled.[1]

The legislators of 1662 declared that the number of the poor had become very great and burdensome, and that the burden was due to the defects in the law concerning the settling of the poor. "Whereas by reason of some defects in the law, poor people are not restrained from going from one parish to another, and therefore do endeavour to settle themselves in those parishes where there is the best stock . . . it shall and may be lawful for any two justices of the peace to remove or convey such person or persons to the last parish wherein they were legally settled." The effects of this statute were very mischievous. The poor, in an imperfect fashion, were endeavouring to accommodate themselves to the law of demand and supply, and to repair to the parishes where their labour was most required. The legislature stepped in, and insisted on their remaining in the miserable localities in which they had been born. The rich man might employ his capital in any industry and in any locality; the poor man might not remove his labour from the narrow circle in which his hard lot was cast.[2]

Parish Apprentices.

If, however, the overseers of rural parishes resented the influx of poor people into their little dominions, they were only too glad to get rid of the children of their own poor. At the period at which this history opens, no

[1] It is fair to say, that Mr Buckle has formed a much more favourable opinion of the legislation of this reign. See *Hist. of Civilisation*, vol. i. p. 381.

[2] By the Act of Charles II a poor person could get a settlement after forty days' residence. But by a law in the next reign it was enacted that such settlement should not count unless notice had been given in writing to the parish overseers. An Act of William III. further enacted that such notice should be published in the church and registered. An Act of 1795 forbade the removal of any poor person until he became actually chargeable, but re-enacted all the other old conditions of settlement, and declared that no settlement should be gained by the payment of poor-rates on any tenement rented at less than £10 a year. There is a good description of these Acts in *Hansard*, N. S., vol. ix. p. 695.

person could practise any trade unless he had previously served a seven years' apprenticeship. In the great majority of cases apprenticeships were voluntary contracts, between the father of a child on one side, and the employer on the other. And to these apprenticeships there was usually no objection. The father might generally be trusted with the selection of a kind master for his son, and the lad ran no more risk of ill-treatment than if he had been sent to school. But there was another class of apprentices much less fortunately situated. The parish had the right to apprentice the children of poor parents to any trade, and the master was compelled to receive the apprentices.[1] Children under this law might be sent to the most distant parts of the kingdom. "It is a very common practice," wrote Romilly in 1811, "with the great populous parishes in London, to bind children in large numbers to the proprietors of cotton mills in Lancashire and Yorkshire, at a distance of 200 miles. The children, who are sent off by waggon-loads at a time, are as much lost for ever to their parents as if they were shipped off for the West Indies. The parishes that bind them, by procuring a settlement for the children at the end of forty days, get rid of them for ever, and the poor children have not a human being in the world to whom they can look up for redress against the wrongs they may be exposed to from these wholesale dealers in them, whose object it is to get everything that they can possibly wring from their excessive labour and fatigue."[2] "Instances (and not very few) have occurred in our criminal tribunals of wretches who have murdered their parish apprentices, that they might get fresh premiums with new apprentices.'[3] The manufacturers, it is shocking to state, agreed to take one idiot for every nineteen sane children.[4] The sufferings, which these poor children endured, hardly admit of relation. There were no laws to regulate infant labour, or to insure the education, the health, or the good treatment of the apprentices. Children commonly commenced to work at the

[1] Warren's *Blackstone*, p. 361.
[2] Romilly, vol. ii. p. 372.
[3] Ibid., p. 373.
[4] *Hansard*, vol. xxxiii. p. 886.

age of seven; they occasionally began work at five. Their ordinary labour lasted for fifteen hours a day, and was not rarely extended to seventeen[1] "Little creatures," said Sir Robert Peel, in 1816, "torn from their beds, were compelled to work, at the age of six years, from early morn till late at night, a space of perhaps fifteen to sixteen hours."[2] The children were little better than slaves, and their condition was more deplorable because their services were less valuable. Those, who have ever read an account of the cruelties perpetrated on every child apprenticed to a chimney-sweeper, will appreciate the wail of infant suffering which was rising from every parish in the kingdom.

It is shocking to relate that humane men, advanced in their views, and thoroughly conversant with the evils which they defended, advocated the continuance of the system. In the opinion of the first Sir Robert Peel,[3] who had raised himself to wealth and honour from a humble situation, it was highly unjust to prevent a man from taking as many apprentices as he thought proper; the children from London were boys educated in picking pockets, and it was the happiest thing possible for them to be removed from their former connections. Another member of Parliament, Mr. Wortley, whose acquaintance with the subject must have been nearly as great as that of Sir Robert Peel, "insisted that, although in the higher ranks of society it was true that to cultivate the affections of children for their family was the source of every virtue, yet that it was not so among the lower orders, and that it was a benefit to the children to take them away from their miserable and depraved parents. It would too be highly injurious to the public to put a stop to the binding so many apprentices to the cotton manufacturers, as it must necessarily raise the price of labour and enhance the price of cotton manufactured

[1] Yonge's *Life of Lord Liverpool*, vol. ii. p. 368.

[2] *Hansard*, vol xxxii. p. 884.

[3] It is only fair to add that Sir Robert Peel was in favour of factory legislation, and was instrumental in passing the first Factory Act, 59 Geo. III. c. 66, forbidding the employment of children under nine years of age, and limiting the hours of work to twelve a day.

goods."[1] The mania for cheap labour was blinding men's eyes, and reconciling them to evils from which their better feelings would have otherwise revolted.

If, however, the lot of the apprentice was hard, that of their parents who remained at home was equally hard. In theory, indeed, the pauper was entitled to as much humane treatment as any other subject of the crown. But, in practice, hard legislation, drawn by local officers, introduced without reflection and passed without consideration, sanctioned the use by overseers of the most inhuman treatment. A measure was passed in 1810, which purported to be a bill for paving, lighting, and cleansing the growing town of Brighthelmstone (Brighton), but which enabled the assistant overseer of the parish "to punish any person, received into the workhouse, who shall be guilty of using any abusive or improper language, with solitary confinement for forty-eight hours;' and which empowered "any five of the directors or guardians, without any proof, or examination on oath, to imprison and keep to hard labour for fourteen days, any person who shall be found wandering or committing any act of vagrancy in the parish." In the same session an Act, passed for regulating the poor in the parish of St George the Martyr, Southwark, empowered any one churchwarden or overseer to cause any children under the age of fifteen, who shall be found wandering in the parish, to be sent to the workhouse, and detained there till they attained the age of fifteen; and to cause "any person, who shall be found wandering or begging, or committing any act of vagrancy or riot, to be sent to the workhouse and detained there as long as the churchwardens and overseers shall direct." Another Act, in the same session, enabled any seven of the trustees of St. Paul's, Shadwell, to send any children found wandering in the parish, whom they shall judge to be under the age of fourteen, to the workhouse, to be detained there till they (the trustees) shall judge that they are of the age of twenty-one; and it enabled the same number of trustees to send any person, who shall be found to misbehave himself,

Poor Law Discipline.

[1] Romilly, vol. ii. p. 393.

to the workhouse, there to be detained and employed as long as they shall think proper, and to be subject to the same punishments as the other poor in the workhouse [1]

But a still more extraordinary measure was introduced in 1811. "I opposed," wrote Romilly, "a bill for regulating the poor of Spilsby and nineteen adjoining parishes in the county of Lincoln, on account of some extraordinary penal clauses contained in it. One of these clauses empowered the master of the poorhouse to punish any of the poor maintained in it, for what he might deem misbehaviour, with solitary confinement, and that without limit; another made the offence of damaging the house, after it should be erected, or any of the fences about it, felony; a third enabled the directors of the poor to let out the paupers, by the day or the week, to any persons they might think proper, to labour for them; and a fourth empowered the overseers of the poor of any parish in the county of Lincoln, to contract with the directors of the poor of Spilsby for the maintenance of their poor, and enacted that, upon such contract being entered into, the poor of all such parishes should be transferred to the house of industry at Spilsby, and be there subject to the same punishments and regulations as the poor of Spilsby." It is a striking illustration of the carelessness, with which measures of this character were introduced, that the members responsible for the bill were not acquainted with the nature of these clauses; that the member who moved its second reading was ignorant of them, that no person in the House knew that there were any such clauses in the bill, and that but for an accidental circumstance it would have been passed as a matter of course [2] Five years afterwards, indeed, or in 1816, a Lincoln poor bill was still in force which gave the guardians power to dispose of a child, who had once been in receipt of relief, as they thought proper; and to inflict corporal punishment.[3]

Such was the character of the legislation, which, at the commencement of the present century, was thought good

[1] Romilly, pp 377-379. [2] Ibid., pp. 375, 376.
[3] *Hansard*, vol. xxxiii. p. 850.

enough for paupers. If a man had the misfortune to be poor, he was liable to be confined for an indefinite period at the instance of parochial officers responsible to no one; he was liable to see his children forcibly removed from him, and sent to places which were for all practical purposes as distant as the West Indies; to know that, on their arrival at their destination, they would be as much at the mercy of their masters as a negro slave; and that they would grow up without instruction, without advice, without assistance from any one.

The hardship and the injustice, which such a system inflicted on the poor, is not capable of exaggeration. But it is very doubtful whether the poor themselves suffered more severely from it than the rich. When a pauper was treated as a criminal, crime seemed no greater offence than poverty; and a poor man, with nothing but a workhouse and a prison to choose between, might think the prison the preferable evil of the two. During the latter years of the war, crime increased with a rapidity, which ought to have startled legislators into adopting some new measures for preventing it. In 1805, 4605 persons were committed for trial, 2783 were convicted; 350 of these were sentenced to death, and 68 were executed. In 1810, 5146 persons were committed for trial; 3158 were convicted; 476 were sentenced to death, and 67 were executed. In 1815, 7818 persons were committed for trial; 4883 were convicted; 553 persons were sentenced to death, and 57 were executed.[1] In ten years the committals rose from 4605 to 7818; the convictions from 2783 to 4883, the sentences to death from 350 to 553; while the executions decreased from 68 to 57.[2] Deplorable as was the increase of crime, to which these figures pointed, during the war, its growth was much more lamentable after the conclusion of peace. Four years afterwards, or in 1819, 14,254 persons were committed for trial; 9510 were convicted; 1314 were sentenced

Criminals and the Penal Code.

[1] Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p 642.

[2] These fifty-seven suffered for the following crimes —Murder and intent to murder, sixteen, burglary, ten, forgery, eleven, robbery from the person, seven, rape, seven, sheep-stealing, three, arson, one, horse-stealing, one; unnatural offence, one.—See Metropolitan Police Report, 1828, p. 286.

to death, and 108 were executed. The first thing which must strike every reflecting mind on seeing these figures, is the extraordinary increase in the amount of crime; the second, the uncertainty of detecting it. Out of every 100 persons who were committed for trial, 33 had a reasonable prospect of acquittal; out of every hundred persons who were sentenced to death, 92 were not executed.

This uncertainty, which undoubtedly encouraged the growth of crime, arose from a natural and pardonable notion. The legislature imagined that the best way of repressing crime was to give the suspected criminal no chance, and to punish the convict with the utmost severity. At the time at which this history commences, the counsel of a man charged with felony was not allowed to address the jury in the prisoner's defence;[1] and the commonest offences were, at that time, felonies. The least influential member of Parliament had sufficient power to have any offence made a capital felony, without benefit of clergy.[2] In 1815 it was a capital offence to steal goods to the value of 5*s.* in a shop. It was a capital offence to steal 40*s.* from a dwelling-house. It was a capital offence to break frames. It was made a capital offence in 1816 to destroy machines. It was a capital offence to steal a horse or sheep. Up to 1808 it had been a capital offence to pick a man's pocket. Up to 1812 it had been a capital offence for soldiers and mariners to beg. It was seriously proposed in 1813 to punish the fraudulent debtor with death. "There are no less than 200 felonies," said Mackintosh in 1819, "punishable with death." Burke once told Mackintosh that, although from his political career he was not entitled to ask any favour of the ministers, he was persuaded he had interest enough at any time

[1] Arnould's *Denman*, vol. i. pp. 225, 243, 250, *Hansard*, N. S., vol. xi. p. 219.

[2] All felonies, except sacrilege and horse-stealing, were up to 1827 felonies with benefit of clergy, provided the same were not expressly excepted by statute. But, as in practice they always were excepted, the law was a mere mockery. Felons were only entitled once to benefit of clergy, which was, practically, very similar to the "first fault" with which many public school boys are familiar. *Hansard*, vol. xvii. p. 936; Kerr's *Blackstone*, vol. iv. p. 95. A felony without benefit of clergy was punishable by death.

to obtain their assent to a felony without benefit of clergy. So easy was it for any one to obtain an addition to the long category of capital felonies. It became in fact necessary to distinguish the higher class of offences with an even greater punishment than death. The ordinary felon, who was hanged, was entitled to be buried. The murderer's body was devoted to anatomy.[1] These severe laws had the natural effect. Informers prosecuted for the sake of the reward which followed the conviction; but ordinary persons hesitated to prosecute an offender who might be punished with death. A Manchester police constable, acknowledged, on the trial after Peterloo, that he had been in the habit of inveigling persons into the uttering of forged notes for the purpose of convicting them; and that he had succeeded in hanging one man in this way.[2] "Our murderous laws," wrote Wilberforce,[3] "prevent prosecutions and often harden convicts' hearts" "John Bull," wrote Hazlitt, "boasts of the excellence of the laws, and the goodness of his disposition; and yet there are more people hanged in England than in all Europe besides"[4]

The severity of the penal code acted as a direct encouragement to the criminal. Juries declined to convict an unfortunate individual of a trifling offence, when conviction might entail the loss of the offender's life; and prisoners were consequently acquitted, not because they were innocent, but because the punishment assignable to the offence was, in the opinion of the country, too severe. A jury, moreover, could never be certain that the judge would not form a much harsher opinion of the case than that with which it was disposed to regard it. Lord Eldon used to defend the retention of a capital punishment for minor crimes because it enabled the judges to rid the world of offenders whom they fancied hardened. "A man was indicted for stealing a horse of the small value of seven shillings and sixpence, and which he had sold for that sum to a horse-butcher. The jury found him guilty," and Lord Eldon allowed him to be hanged; not

[1] Colchester, vol. i. p. 41.
[2] *Ann Reg.*, vol. lxii p 860.
[3] Wilberforce, vol. iv p 370.
[4] *The Round Table*, p. 126.

because he thought the single offence deserved so severe a punishment, but because the man had in his possession skeleton keys of all the turnpike gates near London. In other words, a circumstance, which the jury had not investigated, and for which the prisoner had not been tried, cost the man his life.[1]

Reasons of this character induced Parliament to refuse to listen to every plea for moderation, and to reject every proposal for the reform of the penal code. "We have our professors of humanity like Robespierre," wrote the *Quarterly Review*, in 1816,[2] "who propose the abolition of capital punishment." When it was desired to make transportation for life the punishment of stealing five shillings in a shop, "the twelve judges stepped down from their pedestals, and through Lord Ellenborough, then Chief Justice of England, favoured the House of Lords, for the first time, with an unasked opinion, not of law, but of legislation, protesting against any abridgment of their powers of life and death."[3]

Humane people, in and out of Parliament, were constantly protesting against the severity of the code which the peers and the judges were resolutely bent on maintaining. But humane people might almost have been excused for doubting whether death was not a kinder punishment than the alternative which could be substituted for it. The felon, who was not hanged, was either transported or condemned to hard labour. Transportation was regarded with very different feelings by different

[1] Twiss' *Eldon*, vol. ii. p. 121.

[2] *Quarterly Review* of July 1816, p. 574, quoted in Arnould's *Denman*, vol. i. p. 253. When, in 1783, the place of execution in London was changed from Tyburn to Newgate, Johnson complained, "The age is running mad after innovation, and all the business of the world is to be done in a new way: Tyburn itself is not safe from the fury of innovation. . . . No, sir (said he eagerly), it is *not* an improvement, they object that the old method drew together a number of spectators. Sir, executions are intended to draw spectators. If they do not draw spectators, they don't answer their purpose. The old method was most satisfactory to all parties, the public was gratified by a procession, and the criminal was supported by it. Why is all this to be swept away?"—Boswell's *Johnson*, iv. 204.

[3] Denman, vol. i. p. 253, and vol. ii. p. 320.

classes of convicts. To a woman transportation meant ruin[1] Unmarried men, on the contrary, welcomed the sentence. "The generality of those who are transported," said Mr. Cotton, the ordinary at Newgate, "consider it as a party of pleasure, or going out to see the world; they evince no penitence or contrition, but seem to rejoice in the thing; many of them court transportation."[2] The prisoners, added a constant visitor to the same prison, "rejoice in the prospect of transportation, and it is with the greatest difficulty in the world that that spirit can be restrained. When they go off they are shouting and rejoicing as though some great achievement had been performed."[3] It was stated in the House of Commons in 1816 that there were hundreds of candidates for transportation to Botany Bay on the hulks.[4] Married men, indeed, regarded the punishment with different feelings; and the despair, which they displayed at their separation from their families, proved that they were not wholly destitute of the best of feelings. Men and even women were known to commit crimes in the hope that they might be sent to follow their husbands or their wives to Australasia. One wretched woman, who suffered death in 1815, was induced to commit the offence for which she died, from her great yearning to see her husband, who had been transported for the same felony. But the judge thought it proper "to make an example" of the unhappy creature; and she atoned by her death on the gallows for her exceeding love for her husband![5]

Convicts and Prisons.

If, however, transportation were welcomed by one class of criminals, going to the hulks, or the punishment of seven years' hard labour, was universally dreaded. The severity of the toil had much to do with this dread But it is hardly possible for a modern mind to realise the horrors which were inseparable sixty years ago from a long imprisonment. The metropolis represented the wealth of the country; the metro-

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xxxix. pp. 1435, 1439

[2] Report Metropolitan Police, 1818, p. 171.

[3] Ibid., p. 178

[4] *Hansard*, vol xxxiii. p. 988.

[5] The story is told by Mrs. Fry in her evidence to the Police Committee of 1818, p. 175.

politan prisons were under the direct eye of the legislature. Abuses in Clerkenwell, or in the Bridewell[1] or Tothill Fields, were far more certain of exposure than abuses in a country town. The prisons in the metropolis were, therefore, at least as good and as well managed as those in any other part of the country. Yet the system, or rather want of system, which characterised their management, was deplorable. No attempt was made to isolate, or even classify, the prisoners. Children of the tenderest age were suffered to herd with hardened felons. Women of abandoned nature were allowed to mingle with others who had been simply remanded. The debtor[2] and the felon shared the same yard, and perhaps slept in the same bed. Vice and misfortune, misery and crime, were all branded with the same mark, and condemned to the same fate. Three unhappy lunatics, committed in default of sureties for their good behaviour, were in constant intercourse with the felons in Coldbath Fields. A prisoner, so diseased and offensive as to be unfit for removal to the parish hospital, was permitted to remain and die in a miserable apartment, twenty-one feet by eleven; and in this wretched room twenty-four other persons slept. The innocent might be detained for months in this

[1] The original "Bridewell" was the old palace near St. Bridget's or St. Bride's well, from whence it had its name. The name, after it became a prison, was applied to other prisons of the same sort, says Johnson. In the same way many local prisons are known as "Newgates," many local markets as "Smithfields."

[2] The creditor had originally power to inflict imprisonment on an insolvent. This, however, was altered by 28 Geo. II c 13. By this Act the debtor was entitled to his discharge on surrendering his property, but, where the debt exceeded £500, an objecting creditor had the right to detain him on paying 6*d* a day. The gaols became so crowded that the legislature had, from time to time, to pass temporary Acts to let out insolvents In 1813 an amended Act constituting a new court made the property and not the person of the debtor answerable for the debt. Fraudulent debtors were, however, still liable to imprisonment, and any one might depose on oath to a debt due from him, and the debtor could be arrested on what was known as mesne process. These depositions were occasionally made in spite. A debtor, who himself applied for relief, was a fraudulent debtor. See, inter alia, *Hansard*, vol. xl. p. 587; New Series, vol. xvii. p. 223; vol. xviii. p. 126, and vol. xx. p. 430. The debts of the persons discharged under the Act of 1813 during the first three years it was in operation amounted to £5,597,859, the assets to only £1459.—*Hansard*, vol. xxxiii p. 455.

vicious atmosphere. There was no gaol delivery from Midsummer to Lent. A man might actually, therefore, suffer seven or eight months' imprisonment before he was brought to trial.[1]

There were indeed grades of suffering even in a prison. A prisoner with means was allowed a few slight comforts which the utterly destitute were denied. In most of the metropolitan prisons beds were provided, with fairly clean linen, which prisoners were allowed to occupy for 1*s.* a night. For one-half of that sum a prisoner could obtain a share of a bed with some other inmate of the prison. This singular distinction arose from the circumstance that the gaolers were allowed to make a profit out of the prisoners. Many of the local gaols belonged to private individuals, and were let by their proprietors to the gaolers. Even in London the warden, or gaoler of the prison, had a distinct pecuniary interest in the prisoners "A fee on entrance called 'garnish,' amounting to £1, 1*s.* for debtors, 10*s.* 6*d.* in Newgate for criminals, was supposed to provide coals, candles, brooms, &c. In Newgate the fee for a prisoner who desired to be placed on the 'State' side was £3, 3*s.*, and 10*s.* 6*d* a week for a bed. . . . In order to extract money from the prisoners, the practice was to iron them heavily unless they paid for lighter irons, or for their entire removal. Gaolers fees were [indeed] abolished by law in 1774, but the Act" was evaded, and it was again found necessary to abolish them in 1813. But the Act of 1813 was not much more successful than the Act of 1774· "and at Newgate it was said, even so late as 1836, by the Inspector, that the inability to pay the ward dues exacted for better accommodation consigned many petty offenders to the place where they unavoidably met with further contamination from the society of the most abandoned and incorrigible inmates of the gaol"[2]

It was a natural consequence of this system that the gaoler endeavoured to get the work of the gaol done cheaply. Thus the wardsmen were usually prisoners themselves. They were almost

[1] See Western's motion, in *Hansard*, vol xl p. 1067.

[2] Sir E. Du Cane, *Punishment and Prevention of Crime*, pp. 36, 37.

all felons, and selected for their responsible duties, not from any sense of their worth, but for their conduct within the prison. The most atrocious felon, with sufficient self-restraint to conform to the prison rules, was likely to become a warder; and, as a matter of fact, the Committee of 1818 found two persons, convicted of crimes of an infamous nature, invested with this authority. Men of all ages and of all dispositions, hardened ruffians and timid lads, were thus thrown together, and the worst among them were selected to maintain a nominal order, and to uphold the authority of the law. Theoretically the convict felons were sentenced to hard labour, but in practice no labour was exacted from them The time was spent, not in enforced labour, but in enforced idleness, and the hours were devoted to "indecent and unseemly conversation" [1]

Such a system could hardly be expected to produce any good results The consequences to which it led were, in the unanimous opinion of competent critics, deplorable. "The people were made worse in prison," said the ordinary in Newgate, "they go out better instructed in crime than they entered." "They quit Newgate," said another witness, "much worse characters than when they go in." "Most of the prisoners," said the governor of Coldbath Fields prison, "are as bad when they go out as they are when they come, and some a great deal worse" "The discipline of our prisons," said the chaplain of the same establishment, "corrupts five or ten to every one that it reforms." These were not merely the opinions of interested persons. A Committee which sat in 1822 fully endorsed them, and the increase of crime in the metropolis left no room for doubting their accuracy. In 1806, 889 persons were committed for trial at the Old Bailey; 1413 persons were committed for trial in 1814. In 1815 there were 112 boys confined in the hulks. One of these miserable children condemned to associate with the most depraved and dangerous offenders, was not eleven years old.[2]

Horrible as the system was, a ray of light had already

[1] Metropolitan Police Report, 1818, pp. 13, 14.

[2] Romilly, vol. iii. p. 185, Police Report, 1818, pp. 81, 86, 172, 179.

penetrated the gloom which shrouded the prisons of the country. A humane man had devoted a life to the cause of prison reform; and attention had been forcibly directed to the existence of mismanagement and misery, which the world before had been only too ready to ignore. John Howard was born in 1726; he died in Russia, when he was sixty-four years of age, in 1790. His work was done in a century with which this history has no concern: the fruits of it were only being slowly gathered at the period at which it opens. Howard's own misfortune first directed his attention to the misery of prisoners. Travelling from London to Lisbon during the Seven Years' War, the vessel in which he was a passenger was captured by a French cruiser. Howard was thrown for some time into a French prison, and he thus experienced the misery which prisoners in all countries, whether guilty or unfortunate, had to endure. The recollection of what he had suffered induced him after his release to make a tour of inquiry into the management of English, Irish, Scotch, and Continental prisons. The facts which he collected during these inquiries were published in several works, and the public thus became acquainted with the defects of a system of which they had previously been profoundly ignorant. "He has visited all Europe," said Burke, "not to survey the stateliness of temples, but to dive into the depths of dungeons; to plunge into the infection of hospitals; to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain; to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected; to visit the forsaken, and to compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries."[1] John Howard.

The horrors, which Howard's tours disclosed, almost passed comprehension. A few examples will sufficiently illustrate a singularly painful subject. Chesterfield gaol was the property of the Duke of Portland.[2] It consisted of one room, and a cellar, which had not been cleaned for months, beneath it. Howard found in it four miserable debtors. They had "no

[1] Burke, at Bristol, in 1780.

[2] The Duke let this prison to the keeper for £18, 12*s.* a year.

allowance, no straw, no firing," they were almost starved. The gaol at Ely was the property of the bishop. It had been out of repair, and the gaoler had secured the prisoners by chaining them down on their backs upon the floor. In 1782 Howard found two debtors in this gaol; the debt of the one amounted to 3*s.* 5½*d.*, the other was confined for a few shillings' costs and gaol fees The Bridewell at Abingdon consisted of "two dirty day-rooms and three offensive night-rooms; the straw, worn to dust, swarmed with vermin, no court, no water accessible to prisoners, the petty offenders were in irons, and at my last visit eight were women." So horrible was the high gaol at Exeter, that the surgeon was excused by contract from attending any prisoner in the dungeons that had the gaol fever.[1] The prison at Penzance was the property of Lord Arundel. The men's room was 11 feet square by 6 feet high. It had one window, 18 inches square. In this room Howard found a miserable debtor. "The door," he added, "had not been opened for four weeks when I went in, and then the keeper began shovelling away the dirt." In many prisons the prisoners' allowance of bread was regulated not by weight but by price. At Guildford in Surrey, at Southwell in Nottinghamshire, for instance, the prisoners were allowed three-halfpennyworth of bread a day. At some times 17 oz. and at others only 12 oz. of bread could be purchased for three halfpence. At most prisons a new prisoner was compelled to pay garnish, footing, or chummage; in other words, to find drink for the other prisoners. "Pay or strip," was the demand made of him, and, as the gaol tap was usually kept by the gaolers, the gaolers were interested in maintaining the system. For the same reason the gaolers encouraged the introduction of visitors. In the Fleet in London, butchers and others came to play skittles, fives, and tennis. There was a wine club every Monday, and a beer club every Thursday. Such was the system which it was Howard's mission to destroy. The system was the more horrible because debtors and felons, convicts

[1] This gaol was the property of Mr. Walter. the gaoler paid him £22 rent for it.

and committed persons, were all dealt with in the same way. In 1776, out of 4084 prisoners, 2437 were debtors, 653 petty offenders, and only 994 felons. In many places there was only one gaol delivery a year. In Hull in the eighteenth century they used to have the assize only once in seven years.[1]

Howard died in 1790 a martyr to the cause which he had undertaken. He caught a malignant fever of a poor stricken unfortunate, whom he had humanely visited, and the disease proved fatal to a constitution, which had never been strong, and which had been seriously tried by the work in which he had been engaged. At the time at which he died, a young girl, Elizabeth Gurney, growing up into womanhood at her father's house at Norwich, had already collected twenty poor children around her, and was occupying herself with their education. In the last year of the eighteenth century she moved to London, on her marriage with Joseph Fry, a strict and devout member of the Society of Friends. Her husband was a wealthy banker. Mrs Fry was only thirty years of age, she had the duties both of a mother and of a wife to occupy her time, and the pleasures, which London affords to the wealthy, were at the disposal of her leisure. A casual visit paid to Newgate in 1813 first revealed to her the squalor and misery of the wretched inmates. Touched by the scenes which she had witnessed, she succeeded in forming a society of ladies, who undertook to visit the female prisoners. She was rewarded for her noble exertions by the results of her disinterested ministry. The most hardened and depraved evinced gratitude for kindness to which they had previously been strangers. The female prisoners, who had been previously unmanageable, became docile under her gentle treatment, and a new example was furnished of the truth of the old adage, that you may lead a man whom you cannot drive. A casual anecdote may

Elizabeth Fry

[1] Howard's *State of Prisons*, fourth edition, pp. 12, 15, 219, 278, 291, 320, 323, 339, 383, 397. The gaol delivery at Hull was late in the century fixed at once in three years, in consequence of the acquittal of a murderer, who had been in prison nearly three years, from the death of the principal witness before his trial.

perhaps prove the kind of place that Newgate was when Mrs. Fry commenced her visits In the year before that in which Mrs. Fry formed her association of ladies, a visitor to the prison had his pocket picked within the walls, and his watch stolen. The keeper ordered the convicts to be searched; but the convicts, one hundred and forty in number, considering this "as an encroachment on their liberties," took possession of the common yard, and expelled the officers Driven out of the yard, they mounted the staircase, and, after remaining in revolt for many hours, were ultimately starved into submission. It is now almost impossible to believe that such a scene could have been witnessed in the heart of London in the nineteenth century; but the contemporary annalist, who records the revolt and the subsequent submission of the convicts, hardly appears to realise that there was anything unusual in the events which he gravely relates [1]

Such was the place in which Mrs Fry's noble ministry was carried on. Efficient prison discipline was, in fact, almost impossible, because the construction of the prisons was so faulty that the warders were unable to enforce their authority. There were no means of isolating refractory prisoners; there were no means of preventing the prisoners from combining with each other; and in the case of revolt the collective force of the convicts was arrayed against the warders. A very different person from either Howard or Mrs. Fry was urging the Government to construct a prison on an improved principle It is necessary to reserve for a future chapter any detailed consideration of the work of Jeremy Bentham · it is right, in this place, to observe that Bentham, amidst his other avocations, was constantly pressing on the Government the desirability of constructing a prison on a different model from any which had previously been adopted. Bentham saw that a number of galleries radiating from a common centre might be effectually guarded from a single standpoint; and that therefore, without increasing the number of warders, their efficiency might be almost indefinitely

Bentham's Panopticon

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Chron., p. 129.

augmented. Bentham's model was known as the Panopticon, a name which happily expresses its idea. It ultimately led to the construction of the Penitentiary at Millbank by the Government. But the history of this Penitentiary was, in its way, hardly more creditable than that of the older prisons of the metropolis. Vast sums of money were wasted on the building. Its sanitary condition proved anything but satisfactory, and mistaken notions of philanthropy relaxed the reins of discipline. Men made the common mistake of leaping at a bound from one system to another, and did almost as much harm by pampering the convicts as they had done previously by degrading them [1]

The change of feeling, which was clamouring for the reform of prison discipline, was at the same time insisting on the abolition of degrading punishments In 1815 the punishment of flogging could be still publicly inflicted on women. It was not abolished for two years afterwards [2] Men, however, were still whipped by the score, 6959 persons were flogged in seven years [3] The punishment of the pillory was abolished for every offence except perjury in 1815, and the old parish stocks were gradually removed from the metropolis.[4] All these changes indicated a more humane disposition towards offenders But the true humanity, which endeavours to prevent crime, not to punish it, was still hardly known There was no efficient police force in London. A small horse patrol nominally guarded the suburbs; a small foot patrol nominally guarded the metropolis. The horse patrol consisted of only fifty-four, the foot patrol of only one hundred men The peace of London, otherwise, depended on the parish constables in the daytime, on the old watch at night. The ingenuity of man could have hardly devised a feebler protection. The watchman was appointed by the

Police.

[1] See the recently published History of Millbank.

[2] *Hansard*, vol. xxxvi. pp. 833, 932.

[3] *Hansard*, New Series, vol. viii. p 1438. Flogging women in private was retained up to the year 1819.

[4] The last stocks in London were in Portugal Street, St. Clement le Danes. They were removed in 1826. *Ann. Reg.*, 1826, Chron., p. 117.

parish. His duties did not extend beyond the bounds of his parish. He would not cross those bounds to arrest a criminal or to prevent a felony. He was only required to move out of his watch-box twice in every hour, and his beat was so short that he could be in his box for fifty minutes out of every sixty. No pains were taken to obtain the services of efficient men; no means were taken to increase their efficiency. From motives of humanity old men were retained in the service long after they had ceased to be active. From motives of economy men were engaged who asked the lowest wages, and who notoriously supplemented their wages by contributions from the bad characters around them. In addition, indeed, to the night watch, the authorities of each parish regularly elected either constables or headboroughs. But these officers rarely served in person. Their deputies levied a kind of black mail on the suspicious characters within their jurisdiction; and, in consequence of this black mail, the constable's office, though singularly ill-paid, was sought after by many persons. The headboroughs in Shoreditch received, for instance, only £4, 10s. a year. Out of that sum they had to pay several small fees Yet there was no difficulty whatever in obtaining persons to act as headboroughs. Little reflection, indeed, is sufficient to show that the office must have been very lucrative Some one kept a disorderly house, or infringed the licensing laws. If the headborough were dishonest and the offender were rich, the offence could easily be compounded. If composition were from either cause impossible, the offender could be prosecuted at the Old Bailey, when the headborough obtained his expenses The expenses which a headborough was allowed for a prosecution at the Old Bailey amounted from twenty-eight to thirty-six shillings a day. The expenses were allowed on each case, and an active headborough in a disorderly parish could, therefore, easily make a very good thing out of his office. The ingenuity of the headboroughs, indeed, was sufficient to enable them to improve on this position. If one headborough brought a charge, and another appeared as a witness, both headboroughs were allowed

their expenses.[1] Nothing, therefore, was easier than for one jack in office to serve a friend in office a good turn by dragging him in as a witness. So long as people only broke the law, the parish constables and the headboroughs could easily make a living. It was stated, indeed, on authority, which it is difficult to gainsay, that the headboroughs did not always wait till the law was broken to commence a prosecution. Instances commonly occurred where the headboroughs invented the charge for the sake of getting money for the prosecution of it.[2]

The conduct of the headboroughs in promoting prosecutions was imitated or even exceeded by the other police authorities. By various parliamentary statutes, commencing with the reign of William and Mary, and concluding with the reign of George II, rewards, ranging in amount from £10 to £40, were paid on their conviction for the apprehension of highwaymen, coiners, burglars, sheep-stealers, and convicts at large. No less than £18,000 were paid in such rewards in the single year 1815. But, in addition to these rewards, an old Act of William III. authorised the issue of what was technically called a Tyburn ticket, to any person who apprehended a felon. A "Tyburn ticket" exempted the holder from serving in any office in the parish in which the felony was committed. It was transferable; it was usually sold; and was worth from £12 to £40—the price varying in the different parishes. Any person, who succeeded, therefore, in apprehending the utterer of false money, or even a man with false money upon him, was entitled, on the conviction of the offender, to £40 from the public purse, and to a parochial ticket which in certain cases was worth £40 more. An instance has already been given in this chapter of an officer, who confessed that he had succeeded in hanging an innocent man for the sake of this reward. Other instances of the same character may unfortunately be found by the diligent inquirer. No less than eight persons, one at least of whom was a Bow Street officer, were condemned in 1817 for "seducing people into the commission of criminal offences for the purpose of obtaining the

Blood-money

[1] Report of 1818, p. 137. [2] Ibid.

parliamentary reward on their conviction."[1] "Blood-money," as the parliamentary reward was commonly called, was, moreover, productive of other evils than these. As blood-money was only offered for particular offences, it was the interest of the police officer to avoid interference with the criminal until he committed a £40 crime. Young children were left unpunished for the minor depredations, committed at the commencement of their criminal career, and carefully watched, in the full expectation that they would ultimately do something which would justify the grant of a reward on their apprehension. The criminal, in fact, was fostered up to a certain period of his course by the very officers who ought to have busied themselves in stamping out crime.[2] The thief-takers—as a Middlesex magistrate put it—were interested in concealing and encouraging thieves until their crimes arrived at the highest point.[3] Conscious of these facts, jurymen were in the habit of discounting police evidence. They could not resist the suspicion that the constable was perjuring himself for the sake of the reward. While, then, the detestable system led to the occasional conviction of innocent persons, it concurrently produced the constant acquittal of real offenders. The reward defeated the purpose which had induced the legislature originally to offer it.

It may perhaps be thought that the police officers clung to a system which enabled them occasionally to make large sums of money. But there appears to be little doubt that the more respectable members of the force thoroughly disliked this method of recompensing them for their services They considered, with probably good reason, that, if the rewards were done away with, their pay would necessarily be increased, and that a certain addition to their pay would be a much better thing than the possibility of obtaining an uncertain reward. It is, moreover, shocking to relate that, when the rewards[4] reached them, they had left a considerable proportion of their

[1] See Police Report, 1816, p. 264, 1817, pp. 324 and 423.
[2] Ibid., 1816, p. 65. [3] Ibid., p. 65.
[4] Ibid, 1817, pp. 323 and 325.

substance in the numerous hands through which they had passed. The law required that the reward should be paid without fee; but, in practice, considerable fees were charged before they were paid. The under sheriff charged a fee; an additional charge was made for the judge's signature; and the clerk to the Recorder of London derived a considerable emolument from the complimentary fee which he charged for his own trouble. Numbers of officials had, therefore, a direct pecuniary interest in the maintenance of the system of parliamentary rewards; and the system derived a vitality, which it could not have otherwise enjoyed, from the defence of these interested supporters.[1]

A parliamentary reward, it has been shown, was only paid on the conviction of some of the higher class of offenders. But a reward was also paid on the conviction of persons who were rather unfortunate than guilty. The sturdy vagrant had been a constant object of suspicion from the days of Elizabeth, and strenuous efforts had been made to suppress vagrancy. A poor person, compelled to travel from one parish to another, was bound to provide himself with a pass, which he could only obtain by applying to a magistrate The issue of a pass was, however, only one of the methods by which vagrancy was discouraged. Vagrants, begging their bread, were liable to seven days' imprisonment; and the police in some parishes were encouraged to suppress every appearance of vagrancy by a reward of 10*s* paid on the conviction of each vagrant. The ingenuity of the parochial police enabled them to derive a considerable pecuniary advantage from these circumstances. When a poor person came to the police office for a pass, the police officers were in the habit of saying, "The magistrates cannot grant you a pass, but here is a penny, or twopence." If the poor man accepted the dole, one of the officers immediately apprehended him for begging. The magistrates were easily induced to believe that a poor person, who had accepted some coppers from some one, had previously asked for them, and to commit the unhappy wretch to

Vagrants

[1] Police Report, 1817, pp 323 and 325.

prison. So great was the effrontery of the police, that they occasionally practised the same device a second or third time on one person. A miserable man wanted to be sent home; he applied for a pass; he was poor enough or foolish enough to accept an alms; he was immediately apprehended, committed to prison, and the police officer received ten shillings. A week afterwards he was discharged from custody, but he still desired to go home. He again applied for a pass, he was again foolish enough to accept a penny; the police officer was again rewarded; and he was again sent back to the gaol. It is difficult to credit that such things could have taken place during the nineteenth century; but the fact that they did take place rests on authority which it is hopeless to disturb. It is even stated that the ratepayers of a single parish in the metropolis were defrauded of many hundreds a year by these ten shilling rewards; and that the police officers spoke almost openly of the conviction of a beggar as "an easy ten shillings"[1]

The ordinary criminal escaped with impunity; the attention of the police officers was mainly directed to the acquisition either of a £40 reward, or of "an easy ten shillings," but the governing classes endeavoured to repress other kinds of crime with the utmost rigour. It is recorded that in 1817, 1200 persons were imprisoned under the game laws[2] No mercy was ever shown to the poacher, and, perhaps for this reason, the great body of the community, who had no immediate interest in game, persisted in regarding poaching as a proof of spirit and skill rather than of crime The same thing was true of offenders against the revenue laws. The smuggler was a village hero; and smuggling was conducted with a publicity that can scarcely be credited. In 1816 "twenty-four men marched in military order through Spring Bank to Cowcaddens, in the suburbs of Glasgow, where in the face of numbers of persons, who bawled out 'Success to smuggling,' they entered a house and deposited their laden flasks."[3] Illicit stills were to be found in almost every village in Ireland. Seventy-seven

[1] Police Report, 1817, pp. 325 and 352.
[2] *Ann. Reg.*, 1818, Hist., p 135.
[3] Ibid., 1816, Chron., p. 133.

men were imprisoned at Omagh Assizes in 1816, for possessing illegal stills; sixty at Lifford; ninety at Derry, where the trials were so numerous that the gaol was not large enough to hold the offenders, many of whom were in consequence liberated on bail.[1] Whisky, which had never paid duty, seemed in fact to possess an additional flavour; and persons in high position were not ashamed to drink spirits, which they knew to be the produce of illegal stills. No one knew Ireland better than Miss Edgeworth, yet she makes Lord Colambre, her hero in the "Absentee," reprove his postillion for offering a lift to a man whom he took for an informer The postillion, of course, had done nothing of the kind. The supposed informer had an illicit still himself, and the revenue officer was in hot pursuit of him. Larry, the postillion, sends the officer in the wrong direction, and, on Lord Colambre's laughing remonstrance, "So this is the way, Larry, you give a lift to the laws" "If the laws," replies Larry, "would give a lift to me, your honour, maybe I'd do as much by them. But it's only these revenue laws I mean; for I never to my knowledge broke another commandment. Sure, why would I mind the laws about whisky? Was not I present in the court-house myself, when the judge was on the bench judging a still, and across the court came in one with a sly jug of potsheen for the judge himself, who preferred it, when the right thing, to claret."[2] Larry did not exaggerate the facts of the case. There was not a gentleman residing on the banks of the Shannon, who did not encourage illegal distillation by purchasing what was called putteen or potheen[3] It was in vain that the township was fined whenever an illegal still was discovered The law wholly failed to eradicate the practice. It was in vain that the troops were employed to seize unlicensed stills. Potheen was obtainable in every Irish village. The fines on the townships constituted a new Irish grievance, but illicit distillation was not put down.[4]

[1] *Ann. Reg*, 1816, Chron., p 50.
[2] *Tales of Fashionable Life*, vol. v pp. 207, 208.
[3] *Hansard*, vol. xxxiv. p. 706. [4] Ibid, vol. xxxix. pp. 1504-1516.

In every respect, the criminal system in force at the commencement of the present century was deplorable. The police were inadequate in numbers; they were regarded with suspicion by the surrounding populace, they were tempted to neglect the lower forms of crime, and to occupy themselves with £40 criminals and vagrants. The punishments in force corrupted rather than reformed the offender; and a person, who had once been an inmate of a prison, was almost certain to become a criminal for life. Unhappily, moreover, little attempt was made to check the supply of future criminals The education of the poorer classes was, in too many cases, regarded with dislike by their richer neighbours; and, in consequence, the great mass of the nation grew up in the profoundest ignorance of the most elementary knowledge. A Select Committee, appointed in 1818, to inquire into the education of the poor, collected educational statistics in every parish in England. The diligent inquirer, who is not deterred by 1200 pages of Blue Book, may gather from this return the educational state of every English county at the time as correctly as figures can afford it to him. Nor is it easy to conceive a more melancholy picture England, with a population, which at the preceding census had numbered rather more than 9,500,000, comprised, in 1815, 852,855 poor.[1] Nearly one person in every eleven of the population was a pauper. Four thousand one hundred and seventy endowed schools, enjoying an income of £275,375, afforded an education to 157,783 children. Fourteen thousand two hundred and eighty-eight unendowed schools educated, in some sort or other, 415,711 children. Rather more than 570,000 children were not wholly destitute of educational advantages. But there must, at the very least, have been 2,000,000 children requiring education. So that for one child, who had the opportunity of education, three were left entirely ignorant. These totals, however, lamentable as they are, give only an imperfect idea of the educational destitution which everywhere prevailed. In Berk-

Education.

[1] This was the number of poor stated in the return. The maximum number during the year was greater. See ante, p. 161.

shire, for instance, out of a population of 118,279, there were no less than 17,535 poor. One person in every seven was a pauper. Something like 30,000 children must have required instruction, yet the unendowed and endowed schools educated less than 10,000! The prosperous town of Preston, one of the richest cities in the great manufacturing county of Lancaster, with a population of upwards of 18,000 persons, had one endowed school, educating only thirty-six children. Three other schools, one taught by a master, and two by mistresses, existed in the town; but no information was afforded as to the number of children educated at these humble seminaries. The state of education in England was the more reprehensible because the Scotch for nearly two centuries had enjoyed the opportunity of adequate education. A Scotch Act of 1633 had compelled the landowners to provide schools in every parish. The school-house was usually a very humble building; the schoolmaster was only allowed £22 a year. But, though the education was cheap, it was efficient, and accessible to the ignorant inhabitants of the remotest district.[1]

Miserable as was the quantity of education at the disposal of the poor, its quality was still more deplorable. The returns for a single county may again be quoted as illustrative of the educational condition of the whole of England; and Bedfordshire, which stands alphabetically at the head of them all, may be conveniently chosen for the purpose. Bedfordshire, in 1815, contained a population of 70,213 persons; 6707 of these were returned as poor. There were forty-two endowed and ninety-four unendowed schools in the county, educating respectively 2066 and 1914 children. But of the 136 schools, which were thus provided in the county, no less than forty-six, or more than one-third, were kept by "dames," and only ten, or less than one in every thirteen, were on what was then called the new plan—the only plan which afforded a reasonable prospect of a decent education to the children attending them. Nor do these figures convey any adequate idea of the educational destitution of the county. Bedfordshire was

[1] See Brougham's speech, May 8, 1818, *Hansard*, vol. xxxvii. p. 593.

divided into 125 different parishes. Five of these were comprised in the town of Bedford; and ten were linked together for educational purposes. There ought, therefore, to have been 116 educational centres in Bedfordshire. But in fifty-two out of these 116 centres there were no schools. The poor, therefore, in nearly one-half of the entire county, were entirely destitute of the smallest opportunity of educating their children. They had not even the doubtful advantage of sending their unfortunate children to be imperfectly instructed by an old dame.

Some of the upper classes were unfortunately disposed to regard this state of things with considerable complacency. They imagined that it was a political error to educate the children of the poor, that education only tended to make the poor discontented with their lot, and that poverty ceased to be tolerable when it ceased to be ignorant. Many members of the upper classes, indeed, expressed by their practice a noble dissent from these selfish and vicious opinions. Benevolent ladies and gentlemen endowed or supported schools in their own neighbourhood, excepting, by a genial inconsistency, their own dependents from the doom of universal ignorance to which they condemned the rest of the country. But the endowments were, in many cases, shamefully perverted from their intended uses,[1] and the upper classes in general thought that the poor should not be taught at all, or that they should receive, at the utmost, a moderate instruction in the tenets of the Church of England. More children attended the Sunday schools of Bedfordshire than all the other schools put together; the clergy probably considering that a defective knowledge of Jewish history was of more importance to their flock than reading, writing, or arithmetic. The poor, indeed, were sensible of their own ignorance, and earnest in their anxiety for greater facilities for educating their children. "The poorer classes are desirous of having the means of education," was the refrain which was raised in almost every parish in the kingdom. With a few slight exceptions every

[1] Instances of this will be found in *Hansard*, vol. xxxvii. p. 599.

authority, who filled up a return for the Committee of 1818, admitted that no sufficient means were available for the education of the poor. With still fewer exceptions, every authority agreed in stating that the poor were themselves conscious of their want, and desirous of terminating it.

In one respect, indeed, the educational position was improving. The quality of the education supplied was becoming better. A new system of instruction was gradually taking root in the country. Dr Andrew Bell, to whom this reform was mainly due, was born at St. Andrews in the middle of last century. Entering holy orders, and becoming chaplain to Fort St George at Madras, he benevolently occupied himself with the education of orphan children in the Military Asylum at that place. A dearth of teachers compelled him to avail himself of the services of his most promising pupils, and he consequently introduced the system, which has since been universally adopted, of pupil teachers The plan succeeded so well that Bell became satisfied that it was universally applicable, and, on his return to London in 1797, drew attention to the merits of his scheme in a small pamphlet. The pamphlet attracted little notice till, in the following year, Mr Joseph Lancaster, a dissenter, opened a school in Southwark on Bell's principle Lancaster's undoubted success attracted the enthusiastic support of the dissenting community, and Lancaster schools were immediately established in considerable numbers.[1] Nothing could have been more favourable for the cause of education Reputable churchmen were perfectly willing that the poorer classes should grow up in ignorance of the most elementary subjects; but they were not willing that they should be instructed by the emissaries of a rival sect. The spread of the Lancaster schools led to the estab ishment of Church schools, organised by Bell, and an immense impulse was given to the cause of popular education. The British and Foreign School Society was established by the dissenters in 1807, the National Society by churchmen in 1809. The Church may, therefore, fairly claim that the new system

[1] *Encyclopædia Brit*, ad verb. Bell, Wilberforce, vol. iii. p. 66.

was founded by one of her own children; the dissenters may fairly reply that it would have never been adopted but for the energetic example of a benevolent dissenter. There is some satisfaction in reflecting that religious animosity, which has brought so much evil on the world, and which in the sequel so frequently interfered with educational reform, was the first great stimulus to the spread of education

Deep, then, as was the gloom which overshadowed the land, the dawn of a better day was breaking on the horizon. Romilly was pleading the cause of the criminal classes; Bell and Lancaster were practically demonstrating the possibility of educating the poor. The recollection of what Howard had done, the knowledge of what Mrs Fry was doing, were introducing new and beneficial reform into the management of prisons. These improvements were directly benefiting the most miserable classes in the population. Another great man had just made a discovery, which was as grateful to the rich as to the poor. Among all the diseases which ravaged the population none was more fatal, or more dreaded, than the small-pox. During the last thirty years of the eighteenth century ninety-four persons out of every thousand who died within the limits of the bills of mortality died of this disease.[1] At the close of the eighteenth century, Edward Jenner, a doctor in Gloucestershire, was struck by the accidental observation of a country farmer that a pretty dairymaid was in no danger of the small-pox, because she had had the cow-pox. On pursuing his inquiries he discovered that the farmers in his neighbourhood were all aware that the milkmaids who had had the cow-pox were safe from the small-pox, and it occurred to him that the disease might easily be transferred from the udder of the cow to the human subject. Experiment proved the truth of this theory. Vaccination was the result, and man derived from it in a moment the possibility of protecting himself from the worst of the diseases to which, in this climate, he was liable. The benefits which resulted from this admirable discovery were great and immediate. Vaccination was made

Vaccination

[1] Collated from the statistics in Porter's *Progress*, p. 39.

known in 1798. From 1800 to 1809 the proportions of death from small-pox to all others were reduced from ninety-four to seventy-three in the thousand; from 1810 to 1819 to forty-three in the thousand; from 1820 to 1829 to thirty-five in the thousand.[1] Never had a single discovery done so much to promote the health and, therefore, happiness of man. A grateful legislature properly rewarded the discoverer with two grants of £10,000 and £20,000 each. Napoleon, in the hour of his triumph, assented to a request which Jenner preferred to him because it came from Jenner, and the discoverer's name is now regarded with even greater gratitude than that of Harvey or of Hunter. The small-pox was a disease to which all men were liable, and all men concur in honouring the man who gave them an opportunity of limiting its ravages. La Place told Mackintosh in 1814 that vaccine, when it supplants the small-pox, will add three years to the medium duration of human life.[2]

The Army

It may be necessary to supplement this sketch of the state of society in England with some account of the British army and of the British navy in 1815. The triumphs which the army had achieved, under the Duke of Wellington's guidance, both in the Peninsula and in Flanders, had for the moment effaced the remembrance of the brilliant victories of Jervis, Hood, Duncan, and Nelson, which had made this country undisputed mistress of the seas. But even the lustre, which shone on our arms, had not reconciled the nation to the continuance of a standing army. There are few things more remarkable in modern history than the continuous protest which the English have maintained against the maintenance of an army. For nearly six centuries after the Norman Conquest no king of England ventured to engage a permanent armed body. The Plantagenets and the Lancastrians relied in their brilliant enterprises on the force which the feudal system placed at their disposal, and, though they commuted the service of their retainers for a definite sum of money, and devoted the money, which they thus obtained, to the pay of a

[1] Porter's *Progress*, p. 39. [2] Mackintosh, vol. ii. p. 322.

temporary army, they never ventured to maintain a standing army within the kingdom. "There, my lord," was Elizabeth's noble reply to the Duke d'Alençon, as she pointed to the crowds who received her in the city, "there are my guards." It was with such guards as these that the great queen calmly awaited the invasion of the Armada. She placed herself at the head of the men of England, who were bound by the statutes of armour to provide themselves with arms, and to serve, in the case of danger, in their own immediate neighbourhood.

The progress of society, however, made the continuance of the ancient system impracticable. The statutes of armour were thought to impose an irksome tax on the population; the union of Scotland and England made invasion less likely; and the statutes of armour were repealed. The feudal system survived in name for half a century longer, but finally fell on the restoration of Charles II After the abolition of its last remnants, the crown had no force whatever at its disposal, and insensibly and by slow degrees the formation of a standing army began.

The position at the Restoration was peculiar Charles, on the one hand, was disposed to regard an army with little favour, because Clarendon had told him that the army was "a body of men, who had cut off his father's head; had set up and pulled down ten several forms of government; and that it might be his own turn next." Parliament, on the other, remembered that it was the army which had marched on London, which had purged the House of Commons, and which had enabled Cromwell to usurp all the functions of government, and to exclude the rest of the nation from participating in it. Both the king and the Parliament were then, for the moment, sincere in their resolution to dispense with an armed force But, though the king had no need for an army, he insisted on retaining a guard. The same Act which directed the disbandment of the parliamentary forces sanctioned the continuance of what were then called guards and garrisons. The modest force was soon expanded. The companies were enlarged, new companies were added to regiments, and Charles

found himself at last at the head of 5000 men. The Dutch war afforded him an excuse for augmenting this force. Monmouth's invasion induced his successor to still further enlarge it. A camp of 20,000 men was formed at Hounslow, and Parliament took fresh alarm at a force which seemed assembled for the express purpose of overawing it.

Events had tended to create a standing army during the reigns of Charles II. and James II, but Parliament had protested, at every step, against its continuance. At the commencement of Charles II's reign the Bill of Rights expressly declared that "the raising and keeping up a standing army, without authority of Parliament, is contrary to law." At the close of his reign the House of Commons declared that the continuance of any "standing forces in this nation, other than the militia, is a great grievance and vexation to the country." The camp, which James II formed at Hounslow for his protection, was one of the many circumstances which occasioned his fall.

The Revolution came, but the Revolution, instead of leading to the disbandment of the army, necessitated its increase. The Jacobites unfurled their standard in Ireland; the most powerful of continental sovereigns supported their cause; and, till the peace of Ryswick closed the strife, the country was compelled in self defence to maintain an army. The conclusion of peace led, however, to an immediate agitation for its disbandment. A pamphlet-war, conducted with vigour on both sides, ensued. Moyle and Trenchard, two able members of the Whig party, recapitulated the history of standing armies, and insisted that, from the days of the Mamelukes to the days of the Commonwealth, the existence of a standing army had always led to oppression. A greater man, however, than either Moyle or Trenchard effectually disposed of all their arguments. Somers, in what he termed the "balancing letter," reduced the question from theory to practice, and defended a standing army on the ground of its utility. He showed that the dangers which had been thought inseparable from its institution might be avoided if the army were made dependent on Parliament.

Parliament took the common sense view which Somers had adopted. Outside the House the Whigs had concurred in denouncing all standing armies; inside the House the most zealous Whigs only endeavoured to limit the force in 1698 to the numbers found sufficient in 1680. The principle of a standing army was conceded, and the only question in dispute was its size.

From the days of Somers to the present time no one has ventured to insist on the possibility of dispensing with an army. The question has been limited to the one of degree to which Somers' balancing letter reduced it, and the increase or decrease of the army have alone been in dispute. This alteration in the position of the question was due in the first instance to Somers' letter, but it was also attributable to the legislation which Parliament adopted after the Revolution of 1688. The great grievances, of which the people had complained in the days of the Stuarts, were divisible into four heads. It was asserted that the Crown had raised an army without the consent of Parliament; that in defiance of the Petition of Right the troops had been quartered on the people, that they had been governed by a peculiar code of laws which had never received the sanction of Parliament; and that they had been employed to overawe the legislature The first and fourth of these grievances were obviously removed by Somers' policy. An army, raised with the sanction of Parliament, and dependent on its bounty, could not possibly be used by the Crown to control the legislature The third of the four grievances was terminated by an admirable expedient. A Mutiny Act was passed for the first time in 1689; but the Mutiny Act was only passed for a single year. The Crown obtained the requisite power for governing the armed force which it was authorised to form; but the legislature reserved to itself the right of terminating these powers at a short notice. The reluctance with which the English still regarded the formation of a standing army made it necessary, for a century after Somers' time, to quarter the troops on the people. Parliament refused to provide permanent barracks for the troops, because the pro-

vision of permanent barracks implied the necessity for a permanent army. Even so late as 1812 the erection of some necessary barracks exposed the Tory ministry to unmerited obloquy.

While, however, the country was protesting against the institution of a standing army, the standing army was continually increasing in size and importance. Charles II.'s slender force of guards and garrisons was being gradually developed into a considerable force. William III. had 65,000 men in arms in 1691, and before the conclusion of the war had 90,000 men engaged The army was reduced after the peace of Ryswick to 19,000 men, 12,000 of whom were for service in Ireland, and 7000 in Great Britain. During the succeeding century the British army served in almost every portion of the globe; but the armies, with which Britain achieved her most glorious successes, were frequently composed of foreign troops At the conclusion of each war the army was reduced to the slenderest dimensions At the commencement of the revolutionary war there were not 18,000 men employed in the United Kingdom. About the same number were scattered through the numerous colonies of the British Empire.

The system, under which the army was administered, reflected only too accurately the conduct of the Government in other respects. Birth and favour were the sure passports to distinction, and the common soldiers, treated with the utmost severity, had little but their pay to look forward to. Up to 1806 the troops were enlisted for life, and in 1815 old-fashioned politicians still doubted the expediency of the shorter service which had been at that time introduced by Windham. The men were drawn from the lowest classes of the population; they were occasionally taken from the hulks. While they were retained in the service they were subject to the severest discipline.[1] Men literally died under the lash, or from the effects of it. When they received their discharge, they found little sympathy among the population. "It's us as pays they chaps!" was the

[1] Romilly, vol. iii p. 18.

remark with which the regiment in which Lord Albemarle was serving[1] was received on its return from Waterloo Wordsworth has related, in the "Prelude," his finding a discharged soldier, utterly destitute, painfully endeavouring to find his way home to his distant friends. Every Englishman was proud of the glorious triumphs which the British soldier had achieved. But the British soldier was the very last person whom any Englishman desired to take either into his household or into his employment.

The unpopularity and distrust with which the private soldiers were regarded, did not affect the officers. The military profession was the most gentlemanlike in which it was possible for any one to engage. A boy with brains might possibly be sent to the Bar; a boy with interest might do very well for the Church, a boy with land might hope to represent the family borough. But a boy who had not brains, interest, or land, was generally sent into the army. If he were killed he required no further provision; if he survived his comrades the pecuniary value of his commission became a small fortune. Boys, it must be remembered, who had any interest at all, did not starve for many months on the pay of a subaltern. Sir Charles Stewart was by no means the most unduly favoured of his generation, and his career is not a bad example of the promotion which young men of good family might obtain in the British army at the close of the eighteenth century. Sir Charles Stewart was an ensign at thirteen, a lieutenant at fifteen, a captain at sixteen, a major at seventeen, and lieutenant-colonel at less than nineteen years of age. When he received his first commission he was an Eton boy, and no one thought it necessary to take the boy from school because he happened to be receiving pay in his country's service[2]

The navy was perhaps a less popular profession among the

[1] *Fifty Years of my Life*, vol. ii. p. 68.

[2] Vide for this section of the work Clode's *Military Forces of the Crown*; Moyle's Argument against a Standing Army, Trenchard's History of Standing Armies, published in *State Tracts*, published in the reign of William III.; *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Macaulay's *History of England*, Alison's *Castlereagh*, vol. i. pp. 1–5.

highest classes than the army. Its officers were chiefly drawn from the upper middle class. Parents hesitated to part from their sons at the tender age at which boys went to sea; and they, therefore, preferred a service in which the severance from home ties was usually deferred to a later age. There was, moreover, no purchase system in the navy. The rich man in this profession had no undue advantage over the poor one; and the wealthy preferred a calling in which a full purse was likely to be of service. If, however, the army were the more popular profession in the very highest ranks of society, the navy was much more popular among the British people. Three out of every four of the population had probably never seen the sea; but three out of every four entertained the most sincere conviction that at sea they were invincible. Campbell only expressed the deliberate belief of the nation when he declared— The Navy.

> "Britannia needs no bulwarks,
> No towers along the steep
> Her march is o'er the mountain waves,
> Her home is on the deep"

The country gentleman, sheltered in his patrimonial estate from every blast that swept the ocean; the labourer who had never seen a broader sheet of water in his life than the nearest river; firmly believed that the true home of the nation was the sea; its true defence its wooden walls.

Yet England, at the time of the great war, had not been a formidable naval power for more than two centuries. In the reign of the Tudors the daring of her sons had carried her flag to the remotest territories of the globe. But the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the Dutch had vied with the British; and England possessed no naval force which could compare with the fleets of Spain. The admirable skill and bravery of the British sailors had enabled our English fleet to contend with the formidable Armada. But, though the engagement was a glorious one for the British navy, the destruction of the Armada was rather due to the storms of heaven than the bolts of the English. A century later the

Dutch for a time obtained undisputed mastery of the Channel; and, though Blake subsequently achieved a memorable victory over Van Tromp, De Ruyter in 1667 sailed up the Thames, and insulted the capital of the monarch who disgraced the throne of England. In the war which succeeded the Revolution of 1688-9 the French were at first able to contend on equal terms with the combined fleets of Holland and England, but the great victory of Russell off La Hogue destroyed the naval power of France, and with the commencement of the eighteenth century the English commenced their glorious course of unbroken success at sea. The War of the Succession produced Benbow and Rooke; the war with Spain, Sir George Byng; the Spanish war, Hawke and Anson; the American war, Parker and Rodney. The Spanish and the French were swept from the seas by these great commanders; and the English, used to a career of constant success, shot the captains who hesitated to support their admiral, or the admiral who hesitated to engage the enemy. The triumphs of the British sailors had been great, but the lustre which surrounded Hawke and Rodney was to pale before the rising of an even greater luminary. France twice succeeded in combining the navies of the world against this country, and twice the mighty armaments were destroyed by British sailors. Howe defeated the French off Ushant, Jervis the Spanish at St. Vincent, Duncan the Dutch off Camperdown The marvellous success of Nelson confirmed the impression, which these victories had produced, that the British sailor was invincible; and the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar made this country undisputed mistress of the seas. Once again, after Trafalgar had apparently decided the question for ever, Napoleon endeavoured to array the navies of the world against the British empire. But the Danish fleet was captured at Copenhagen; the Russian fleet surrendered in the Tagus; and the flag of England waved supreme over every sea.

These brilliant successes had made the British sailor regard himself as invincible, and had made his enemies afraid to attack him. It is hardly possible to doubt that the British in many

instances owed their success to the terror which their deeds inspired. Admiral Duncan, deserted by all his ships, blockaded the whole Dutch fleet. A British merchantman defeated four privateers, and, with twenty-six men, took 170 prisoners. No odds seemed too great for the British sailor to encounter, no exploit too difficult for him to undertake. An universal faith in his invincibility made him invincible, and the reputation which he had achieved filled his enemies with alarm. Yet the men, of whom the nation was thus proud, were raised in a manner and treated with a severity which already appear incredible. The captain, who required sailors to man his ship, sent a press-gang into the streets of any seaport, and swept any able-bodied sailors whom he found into the service. The slightest disobedience was punished, on many ships, with the lash, and floggings were administered with merciless severity. Men, driven into the service by force, and flogged into submission, might have been expected to have lived in a state of chronic mutiny Fortunately, however, for the navy, the great majority of commanders were as humane as they were brave; and, with some exceptions, the men consequently clung to them with affection Seafaring men, however, used every exertion to escape impressment, and the devices to which they resorted ultimately occasioned a new war with the only powerful country with which Britain had remained at peace. British sailors, fearing impressment, entered the American merchant-service as naturalised Americans, the United States refused to allow her merchantmen to be searched. A dispute, created in this way, was intensified by other differences. War broke out between the United Kingdom and the United States; and in this war the British navy did not increase its reputation. The American navy was manned by men of the same origin as those who had fought at Copenhagen and Trafalgar, and American sailors proved their capacity to contend on equal terms with their opponents. America, indeed, had no fleets which could venture to attack the British navy. But American privateers, scouring the seas, fought a series of battles with British cruisers; and the advantage in these contests did not always

or even usually lie with the British. The reputation of the British navy was tarnished by these reverses at the moment at which the fame of the British army was raised to the highest eminence by the strategy of Wellington. The laurels which had been won by the navy were suddenly transferred to the army, and the lustre which had surrounded one service was paled by the light of the more recent victories achieved by the other. The sword, however, was not to be finally sheathed till the navy had a new opportunity of marking its prowess.

The expedition to Algiers.

On the extreme north of the coast of Africa a warlike and piratical state menaced the peaceful operations of the Mediterranean trader. The name of Barbary was indiscriminately applied to the states of Algeria, Morocco, Tripoli, and Tunis, occupying the portion of the African coast which was bounded by the Atlantic on the west, by the Mediterranean on the north, by Egypt on the east, and by the Great Desert on the south. The most powerful of these states was Algeria; and its great fortresses of Oran and Algiers, from their situation and their strength, were a standing menace to the Spanish kingdom. At the commencement of the sixteenth century the illustrious Ximenes persuaded Ferdinand of Spain to attempt a crusade against Oran, and had the satisfaction of entering the Moslem city at the head of an expedition undertaken at his advice, furnished at his own cost, and guided by his counsels. Never had Christian prelate achieved so great a triumph as the infirm old Spanish cardinal. The consequences of the victory were splendid. Algiers and Tripoli surrendered to the arms of Spain, the opulent marts of the Barbary Coast were opened to the Spanish trader, and the Mediterranean was freed from the piratical marauders by whom it had been infested. Spain, however, did not long retain her superiority on the Northern Coast of Africa. Horuc the corsair, whose red beard gained for him the nickname of Barbarossa, undertook to expel the Spaniards from a fort which they had built in the neighbourhood of Algiers. Murdering the Moorish prince, who had invited his assistance, he usurped the kingdom which he had come to protect; and, rapidly

extending his dominion, planted a monarchy, founded on piracy, on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. The arms of Spain eventually defeated and destroyed this troublesome marauder. But Horuc's brother, Hayradin, succeeding to his dominion and nickname of Barbarossa, extended his piratical enterprises with more than Horuc's success Algiers, fortified at vast expense by the work, it was alleged, of 30,000 Christian slaves, afforded the corsair's fleets ample refuge from any troublesome enemy. A formidable expedition, which the Emperor Charles V. organised against the corsair, was terminated by a frightful disaster; and a state avowedly dependent on piracy, and employing its Christian captives as slaves, continued to menace the trade of the Mediterranean.

During the two centuries and a half, which succeeded the expedition of Charles V., the piratical government of Algiers was frequently attacked by the Christian states of Europe. Algiers was, on one occasion, reduced to ashes by the French, and its inhabitants were compelled to abstain from their piratical pursuits. But the gain was never more than temporary. The possession of Gibraltar and Minorca by the British, indeed, induced the Algerines to treat British shipping with a respect which they declined to pay to the vessels of other powers. But the corsairs of Barbary still scoured the Mediterranean; the captives, whom they had taken from Christian vessels, still languished in captivity in Algiers; and to the disgrace of the civilised world, a piratical state was suffered to exist in its very centre.[1]

The outbreak of the Revolutionary war facilitated the ravages of the Barbary pirates. England was the only formidable naval power, and the defenceless vessels of other countries were exposed to the attacks of the corsairs. But the conclusion of the war made the continuance of these ravages intolerable. In the interests of civilisation it was essential

[1] Many people will recollect that Pringle, of Crichton, who killed Sir Walter Scott's great-grand-uncle in a duel, fled to Spain, and was long a captive and slave in Barbary. See Scott's own account of this in his autobiography in Lockhart's Life, p. 2.

that piracy should be put down, and it devolved upon Britain, as mistress of the seas, to do the work. But the task which it was necessary to accomplish was one which even taxed the resources of the British navy. The city of Algiers is built on the northern slope of a steep triangular hill facing the Mediterranean. In 1815 the summit of the hill, five hundred feet above the level of the ocean, was crowned by the Casbah, or ancient fortress of the seas. The town was surrounded with a stout wall, strongly fortified. The fortifications on the sea front were especially formidable and heavily armed. A long pier, three hundred feet in length, projected into the sea. From the end of the pier a semicircular mole, constructed on a ledge of rock, bent in a south-westerly direction towards the town. One hundred and twenty yards from the mole, and opposite to it, another small pier protected the entrance to the harbour. The piers, the mole, the rock on which the mole stood, the batteries above the harbour, were lined with cannon. Five hundred guns thus defended the sea front of the town, and the formidable navy of the Dey of Algiers was ready to support the land defences.

Happily for this country the Mediterranean command was held by an officer whose bravery and skill were fully equal to the dangers before him Lord Exmouth, the son of Samuel Pellew, the commander of a Dover packet, was born in 1757; he entered the navy in 1770, and for more than forty years was actively engaged in his profession He served with distinction in every part of the world During the American war his gallant conduct on the great inland waters of the Western World gained him the commendations of his commanding officer and his promotion. He participated in General Burgoyne's inglorious campaign, and was reluctantly compelled to share in the capitulation of Saratoga. When the French Revolutionary war broke out he was appointed to the command of the *Nymph*, and, after a desperate action, captured the *Cleopatra*, a French frigate. For this exploit he received the honour of knighthood and was promoted to the command of the *Arethusa*. He subsequently served in the *Inde-*

fatigable and in the *Tonnant*, and in each of these vessels increased the reputation which he had already acquired. His appointment to the command in the East Indies removed him from the theatre in which laurels were to be chiefly won; but, after the death of Collingwood in 1811, he received the command in the Mediterranean. The French, however, were too cautious to risk an engagement with the British admiral, and the British fleet rode in undisputed supremacy over the great inland sea. Pellew, at the close of the war, received the barony of Exmouth, both in recognition of his own services and of those of the navy; and, when the ministry determined to punish the piratical states of Barbary, they naturally availed themselves of Lord Exmouth's services.

Early in 1816 Exmouth was instructed to proceed to the several states of Barbary; to require them to recognise the cession of the Ionian Islands to Britain; to conclude peace with the kingdoms of Sardinia and Naples; and to abolish Christian slavery. The Dey of Algiers readily assented to the two first of these conditions; the Beys of Tripoli and Tunis followed the example of the Dey of Algiers; and in addition consented to refrain in future from treating prisoners of war as slaves Exmouth thereupon returned to Algiers, and endeavoured to obtain a similar concession from the Dey. The Dey pleaded that Algiers was subject to the Ottoman Porte, and that slavery could not be abolished without the concurrence of the Sultan. He consented, however, to send an ambassador to Constantinople, in a British frigate, for the purpose of obtaining the Sultan's consent to the arrangement. Exmouth accordingly agreed to a suspension of hostilities for three months, and returned to England to report the result of his negotiations.

Exmouth had hardly set sail for England before an outrage was committed by the Algerines which entirely altered the complexion of affairs. Up to this time the Algerines had scrupulously respected the British flag. An establishment had been formed at Bona, on the coast of Algiers, for carrying on the coral fishery; and the operations, which were undertaken

by Corsican, Italian, and Neapolitan boats, were conducted under the protection of the British flag. On May 23, the festival of the Ascension, while the crews were preparing to hear mass, a gun was suddenly fired from the castle, and 2000 Algerine troops unexpectedly appeared and moved upon the fishermen. The whole of the unfortunate men were massacred; the British flag was torn to pieces and trampled under foot; the house of the British vice-consul was pillaged; and the vice-consul himself was detained in the town.

It is uncertain whether this unprovoked attack on some defenceless fishermen was actively encouraged by the Dey's government. But the British Government rightly concluded that, whether it were actively encouraged by the Dey or not, it was necessary to regard it as a direct affront which it was indispensable to avenge. Lord Exmouth was desired to obtain from the Algerines effectual security for their future peaceful conduct; and he was invited to name the force with which he would be willing to undertake the reduction of Algiers. The experience, which the admiral had gained in his previous visit to the Dey, now stood him in good stead. He had noticed the comparatively narrow front which Algiers presented to the sea, and he concluded that a small force would operate in this narrow space as efficiently as a large one. With this information in his possession he demanded only five ships of the line, five frigates, and five bomb vessels. The ministry was alarmed at the moderation of the admiral. There was a tradition at the Admiralty that Nelson had himself affirmed the impossibility of attacking Algiers with less than twenty-five sail of the line; and the ministry doubted the possibility of Exmouth effecting with a small force what Nelson had declined to undertake without a large one. There was this difference, however, between the opinions of Nelson and Exmouth: Exmouth had made himself personally acquainted with the strength of Algiers; Nelson had only derived his information on the subject from the reports of other persons. Exmouth, from his acquaintance with the locality, was enabled to convince the ministry of the sufficiency of his own estimate. The force which he required

was rapidly got ready, and before the summer of 1816 was over Exmouth set sail for Gibraltar.

Exmouth received at Gibraltar a reinforcement which he had not anticipated. Admiral Capellen, of the Dutch navy, asked leave to join in the dangers and honours of the expedition, and Exmouth readily assented to the gallant Dutchman's request. The reinforcement was not unwelcome. Exmouth, on reaching Gibraltar, learned that the Dey was making extraordinary preparations against the expected attack. Additional works were being rapidly thrown up on both flanks of the town and at the entrance of the mole. Forty thousand men had been brought down from the interior for the construction and defence of the fortifications; and the Dey openly avowed that he was aware of the preparations of the English, and that he was straining every nerve to meet them. The British consul had been arrested, four officers and fourteen men of the *Prometheus* had been also thrown into captivity; and the Dey, by these measures, had indicated his resolution to resist the British demands, and his conviction that he was strong enough to do so.

Every day's delay, then, was increasing the strength of Algiers, and Exmouth consequently decided on leaving Gibraltar without delay. Head-winds and calms baffled his intention, and the fleet, which left Gibraltar on the 14th of August, notwithstanding the exertions of its commander, did not reach Algiers before daybreak on the 27th of August A calm rested on the surface of the deep There was not wind enough to move the ships towards the town; and Exmouth seized the opportunity of despatching an officer in a boat to deliver an ultimatum to the Dey. The principal demands which Exmouth had been instructed to make were four. first, the immediate surrender of all Christian slaves without ransom; second, the restitution of the money which had been paid for the ransom of some Sardinian and Neapolitan captives; third, a solemn declaration from the Dey that he would, in future wars, treat all prisoners according to the usages of European nations; and fourth, the conclusion of peace with the Netherlands on the same terms as those on which it was concluded with the English.

It was nearly two o'clock in the afternoon when the boat which Exmouth had despatched with his demand, was observed returning from the harbour. A signal was flying from her that no answer had been received from the Dey. A light sea breeze had in the meanwhile sprung up; and the fleet, animated into motion, bore down under a press of sail on the city. Exmouth himself, on board the *Queen Charlotte*, led the way towards the mole, and anchored within a pistol-shot of the enemy's batteries. Admiral Capellen, on the *Melampus*, took up his position off the southern batteries. Admiral Milne, in the *Impregnable*, Exmouth's second in command, closed the British line

A profound silence prevailed on both sides The Algerines permitted the ships to move into their stations. The British reserved their fire till they could deliver it with full effect. A crowd of spectators watched the ships from the shore, and Exmouth waved his hat to them to move and save themselves from the fire They had not the prudence to avail themselves of his timely warning. A signal shot was fired by the Algerines from the mole. The *Queen Charlotte* replied by delivering her entire broadside. Five hundred men were struck down by the first discharge. In a few minutes the batteries on the mole-head were silenced, and the *Queen Charlotte* was enabled to turn her attention to another part of the fortifications.

The battle, which thus began at two o'clock in the afternoon, continued till ten o'clock in the evening By that time half Algiers had been destroyed, the whole of the Algerine navy had been burned; and, though a few of the enemy's batteries still maintained a casual fire, the principal fortifications were crumbling ruins; the majority of the guns were dismounted. The British and Dutch fleets had done their work, and it was time to withdraw them from the annoyance of a dropping fire. Happily, too, the wind favoured the withdrawal of the allied fleet. In hot countries the wind blows from the sea to the land in the daytime, because the land, heated by the sun's rays, warms and raises the air, producing a vacuum which the cool sea-breeze fills. After sunset, however, the sea retains its heat

longer than the earth, and the wind therefore blows from the land to the ocean. Exmouth had calculated on the sea-breeze to assist him in his attack, he had relied on the land breeze to facilitate his retreat; and the light wind, which had sprung up after sundown, enabled him to withdraw his vessels from the range of the enemy's batteries. Safe from molestation, they could temporarily repair their losses, and prepare, should further action be necessary, for a renewal of the contest

The work, however, had been already done so completely that no renewal of the contest was possible. "For your atrocities at Bona on defenceless Christians," wrote Exmouth to the Dey, "and for your unbecoming disregard to the demands I made yesterday, the fleet under my orders has given you a signal chastisement by the total destruction of your navy, storehouses and arsenal, with half your batteries. As England does not war for the destruction of cities, I am unwilling to visit your personal cruelties upon the inoffensive inhabitants of the country, and I therefore offer you the same terms of peace which I conveyed to you yesterday in my sovereign's name: without the acceptance of these terms you can have no peace with England. If you receive this offer as you ought, you will fire three guns; and I shall consider your not making this signal a refusal, and shall renew my operations at my own convenience." The fleet awaited the issue of this message in anxious expectation. Three hours elapsed before the three shots, fired in succession, announced the Dey's unconditional assent to the British ultimatum On the first day of September Exmouth had the satisfaction of acquainting his Government with the liberation of all the slaves in the city of Algiers, and the restitution of the money paid since the commencement of the year by the Neapolitan and Sardinian Governments for the redemption of slaves

Chronologically the expedition to Algiers took place within the period with which this history is concerned. But the bombardment of Algiers forms rather the sequel of the period of war which desolated Europe from 1792 to 1815 than the prelude to the period of peace which was won by the crowning

victory of Waterloo. Algiers would never have been permitted to exist as the pest and scourge of the civilised world, if the great nations of Europe had not been more intent on their own quarrels than on preserving the seas from the rapacity of piratical marauders. When peace was signed it was no longer possible to allow the states of Barbary to continue their lawless depredations; and the nation which was virtually mistress of the seas was compelled for its own credit to put down the robbers by whom the ocean highways were infested. Exmouth's expedition was then unavoidable; but the manner in which it was undertaken, and the courage and promptitude with which it was carried out, afford remarkable proofs of the strength of the British navy and of the hardihood of British sailors. Algiers had the reputation of extraordinary strength, yet Exmouth had the courage to attack it with a force which even men accustomed to the deeds of the British navy conceived inadequate. His courage was justified by the result. It was on the 23rd of May that the outrage at Bona was committed: on the 27th of August it was signally avenged. In the ninety-five days, which intervened between these two dates, the news of the outrage had been brought to England; the expedition under Exmouth had been determined on; its organisation had been completed; it had sailed and accomplished its object. Rarely before had a signal insult been so swiftly avenged. The world understood from the blow that Britain could strike swiftly and strike hard. A new leaf was added to the wreath with which her arms were already crowned; a new chapter was added to the history of the British navy.

In one other particular, moreover, the expedition to Algiers gained fresh honours for this country. Britain was, in one sense, the nation which had the least interest in terminating the lawless ravages of the states of Barbary. Her strength on the seas had won for her standard a respect which the Algerine corsairs paid to the flag of no other power The pirates of Africa inflicted less injury on her commerce than on the trade of other nations. Yet Britain voluntarily undertook the work which other countries were still more interested

in performing. She recognised that her position, as mistress of the seas, made it her duty to maintain the police of the ocean; and at her own charge, without solicitation, without recompense, she hurled her fleet against the strongest of Mussulman fortresses. The loss which she sustained was considerable; but it was trifling when it was weighed against the consequences of the achievement. One hundred and twenty-eight men were killed and 690 wounded on board the British fleet; the Dutch lost 13 killed and 52 wounded. Every death on the field of battle is a subject for regret. It is but poor comfort to those who mourn to assure them that their mourning is shared by only a few others. But it is impossible to deny that the sacrifice of 150 lives was only a light price to pay for the permanent delivery of the Mediterranean from the scourge of piracy. Every British life lost at Algiers won the immediate liberation of twenty Christian slaves, and spared in future years other Christians from the horrors of slavery.

Nor, amidst the congratulations which followed the victory, was it possible to avoid satisfaction at the circumstances under which it had been achieved. The cause of Christianity had again united the British and the Dutch; and the flags of Britain and Holland had shared the dangers of the battle and the glories of the victory. Situation, religion, tradition, and taste pointed to a firm alliance between Holland and England. Both of them were placed on the north-western frontier of Europe. Both of them had accepted the tenets of the Reformed faith. Both of them had stood in arms to resist the ambition of Catholic Spain. England had on one memorable occasion obtained a king from Holland The Dutch and English shared between them the carrying trade of Europe. Yet, though Holland and England had so many grounds for close alliance, England and Holland had too frequently been engaged in warfare with each other. The keen rivalry, which had animated the fleets of Blake and Van Tromp, was recollected by the sailors of the Batavian republic. Holland ranged herself on the side of France; and the Dutch and English again contended for the mastery of the seas. The expedition to

Algiers had the merit of effacing the recollections of the long war. The glorious success, gained by the Dutch and English combined fleets, obliterated the traditions of Camperdown and Walcheren.[1]

There was one other point in which the expedition to Algiers was important. It was a new mark of the increasing prostration of the Mussulman power. The Mohammedans had for centuries been expelled from Western Europe; but they were still formidable in the Western Mediterranean. Exmouth's victory imposed new limits on their power. The crescent retired before the cross; and the followers of Mohammed ceased to be a terror to Christian merchantmen. The victory which was thus gained formed only a single link in a long series of events. The decline and fall of the Mussulman race was as gradual as its rise. The history of the Mohammedan power may, indeed, be compared with the familiar changes in the luminary which the Mohammedans have chosen as the symbol of their race. The crescent, which was emblematical of their progress, also foreboded their decay. The light of the waning moon grows fainter and fainter as it is overtaken by the god of the coming day; and the splendour of Mohammedan civilisation paled beneath the rays of European progress. Will it be ultimately extinguished in the full sunlight of a Christian and civilised world?

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Hist., pp 97–105, Chron., pp 230–243. Alison's *Hist. of Europe*, vol. i. pp 136–155. Osler's *Life of Lord Exmouth*, pp. 294–325.

CHAPTER III.

OPINION IN 1815.

THE reign of George III. will always be remarkable for the development of British industry and British trade. The ability and ingenuity of a few great men placed new resources at the disposal of the nation; and, by substituting the steam-engine for the hand of man, the road for the track, and the canal for the road, increased a hundredfold the resources of the country, and its capacity for industrial enterprise. It is questionable whether great wealth and great prosperity are favourable to the cultivation of literature, science, and art. This country, at any rate, has become much wealthier since the days of Elizabeth. But it has failed to produce a second Shakespeare.

English Literature.

The almost unanimous verdict of competent critics has pronounced the most brilliant era of English literature to have commenced with the age of Elizabeth and to have closed with that of Anne. The century and a half which is embraced in this period produced the two greatest masters of the English language—Shakespeare and Milton But other writers, some of whom were hardly inferior to these, dignified this golden period of English literature. Spenser, Sidney, Beaumont, Fletcher, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Raleigh, Bacon, Cowley, Selden, Clarendon, Bunyan, Butler, Defoe, Dryden, Swift, Addison, Steele, Pope, and Bolingbroke, in various ways illustrated and enriched the noble language of their common country. A circumstance, with which they had no direct connection themselves, stereotyped the expressions which they used. The Bible was translated into English at the time at which Shakespeare was writing. The Reformation placed the work in the hands of every Englishman who could read. The

language of the Bible became the language of the nation; the expressions which its translators used became a part and parcel of English speech. An ordinary person can hardly read the pre-Reformation writers without a glossary. No one requires a key to enable him to appreciate the beauties of the Elizabethan dramatist or to understand Raleigh's "History of the World."

Success in any line of life usually leads to imitation. Where one man achieves fame, a hundred others think that they may become equally famous. Birmingham ware has in every age been foisted on a credulous public, and "Brummagem" has appeared in spurious literature and art nearly as frequently as in spurious silver and gold. The scholars of Raphael imitated with matchless fidelity the finish of their master; and an uncritical age, enchanted with the beauty of their pigments, forbore to notice their want of originality and power. Exactly the same thing occurred in literature in the eighteenth century. Few writers, indeed, had the hardihood to imitate the imagery of Shakespeare, the diction of Milton, or the vigour of Dryden. But a dozen writers succeeded in copying the rhythmical excellence of Pope. Though, however, they caught the trick of Pope's style, they failed to imitate the vigour of his language. Churchill, the most successful of them all, attacked with power and venom some of the vices of his time. But the "Rosciad" ranks as a poem below the "Dunciad" Pope's other imitators hardly attained an equal degree of merit, and the reigns of the two first Georges were not remarkable for the contributions made to English literature.

> "Augustus still survives in Maro's strain,
> And Spenser's verse prolongs Eliza's reign.
> Great George's acts let tuneful Cibber sing,
> For nature formed the poet for the king."

Intellectual activity in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

During the first seventy years of the eighteenth century, the literature of Britain gradually declined from the high position which it had occupied in the reign of Anne; but, during the latter portion of this period, the gradual decadence of imaginative literature was accompanied with a remarkable development of reasoning, in-

vestigation, and research. The foremost thinkers of the time were no longer satisfied with accepting the theories which their predecessors had venerated as axioms, and the boldest inquiries were freely pushed into every branch of human knowledge. This intellectual activity was equally visible in England and Scotland. In physical science, Scotland produced Black and Hutton; England, Priestley and Cavendish; Scotland the land of his birth, England the country of his adoption, have an equal claim to the merit of John Hunter's profound investigations into the structure of men and animals. The glory attaching to the great inventions of the period belongs equally to the two countries England produced the machines which revolutionised every branch of the textile industry; a Scotchman elaborated the motive power, without which these inventions would have been deprived of half their value.

The investigations which were made by Black, Priestley, and Cavendish in physical science, the knowledge of the anatomy of the lower forms of animals which John Hunter succeeded in acquiring, and the foundations which Hutton laid of the modern science of geology, had ultimately a prodigious effect on the thinking portion of British men and women. This effect will, however, be more conveniently considered in connection with the great religious movement which commenced towards the close of the first half of the nineteenth century, and which was in reality the reaction of the more superstitious portion of the community against the free thought which scientific investigation had produced. For the present, therefore, it is unnecessary to refer any further to the purely scientific investigations of the eighteenth century. But the same intellectual activity which animated Priestley and Black, characterised also another class of thinkers, who exercised an enormous influence on the minds of succeeding generations. The decade in which Black was born gave birth to Adam Smith; and Adam Smith may be said to have changed the whole theory of government, and in this way to have contributed more than any other person to the great revolutions of the nineteenth century.

Adam Smith.

At the time of Adam Smith's birth, the foremost statesmen and thinkers were of opinion that a legislature by wise laws could exercise a beneficial influence on its country's fortunes. The political arithmeticians of the previous century had adopted the erroneous notion that the precious metals, the most useless of all commodities, were the sole sources of wealth. In their view, a country could not be prosperous unless its exports showed a balance over its imports, which the foreigners had to pay for in gold. The acceptance of this theory logically led to the artificial encouragement of the export trade, and to the artificial discouragement of the import trade. The first object was attained by the grant of bounties on the export of articles of British produce, the second by the imposition of import duties on articles of foreign produce. Both courses proved equally fatal to the home consumer, since the price of every commodity in common use was raised by the system; in the long run they were equally fatal to the capitalist, since they induced him to invest his capital in undertakings which did not thrive naturally on the soil of Britain, but which had to be fostered, like tropical plants, by artificial methods.

Indirectly, the conclusions of the political arithmeticians were even more disastrous. If every article of foreign produce had to be paid for by a sacrifice of British wealth, it naturally followed that the welfare of the nation depended on its being self-supporting. It seemed necessary, therefore, that the country should grow at least as much corn as it consumed. It was obvious that more land would be cultivated, and more corn would be grown, if the price of grain were high than if it were low; and a series of laws was in consequence passed to discourage the importation of foreign corn, and to raise the price of British corn. The same chain of reasoning induced politicians to conclude that the welfare of the country depended on labour being cheap If wages rose, the British manufacturer would compete on less favourable terms with the foreigner. Cheap labour and dear corn were, therefore, the miserable objects which every patriot was bound to desire.

A creed of this sort was naturally acceptable to the ruling

classes, to whom it was addressed. They were not likely to question conclusions which increased their rent rolls and raised their importance. They willingly accepted the welcome doctrine, and pushed the theories of the political arithmeticians to their logical extreme. For the sake of securing a favourable balance on the foreign trade of the country, they undertook to interfere in the commonest affairs of life. They endeavoured to regulate the clothes which the living should wear, and the shrouds in which the dead should be buried. The Irish were to devote themselves to linen goods, the English were to have a monopoly of the woollen trade, pure cotton goods were not to be worn, and French silks were to be confiscated at the instance of any informer. When legislators thus attempted to regulate the ordinary details of domestic life, they naturally carried their principles into larger concerns. The carrying trade was to be confined to British ships; British ships were to be manned by British crews, capitalists were only to charge specified rates of interest for the use of their capital; every one entering a trade was to undergo an apprenticeship. The direct interference of the legislature was, in short, visible in every affair of life, and the time of Parliament was occupied with regulating the conditions on which every trade and every industry should be conducted.

The minute regulations which were in consequence made in every branch of industry would undoubtedly have materially interfered with the development of British trade, which subsequently occurred. At the time, however, at which the great inventions of Watt and Arkwright were being perfected, Adam Smith was engaged on the profound investigations which he made into the true causes of the wealth of nations. It was the object of the "Wealth of Nations" to prove that the economical conclusions which had been universally accepted in the world were erroneous. Wealth, the author showed, was produced by labour, or—which is really the same thing—by capital, which is the accumulation of previous labour. The labourer and the capitalist were better judges than the State of the industries in which their capital and labour might

most usefully be employed; and all interference with their freedom was therefore unnecessary and objectionable. The favourable balance of trade, which political arithmeticians had been intent on securing, was an object with which legislators had nothing to do. Importance had only been attached to it because the political arithmeticians had fixed their attention on the foreign trade of the nation, and had overlooked the internal or domestic trade, which was of more importance and a surer source of wealth. The chief rule of legislation should be to leave men to themselves. Every man was the best judge of his own interests, and what was true of each man taken singly was true also of any body of men in the nation.

The conclusions which Adam Smith thus expressed in the "Wealth of Nations" entirely subverted the ideas which had previously been fashionable. Protection had been the natural result of the doctrine, which had been taught by Adam Smith's predecessors. Free trade was the logical consequence of the new teaching. The change was so great that the minds, which had ripened into maturity under the influence of the old ideas, were unable to grasp the full force of the new gospel. Fox, who in every respect was one of the most liberal of his generation, declared that the "Wealth of Nations" was "plausible and inconclusive," Tory statesmen, like Lord Ellenborough, thought the book so dull that they were absolutely unable to read it;[1] even Lord John Russell, in one of his early essays, pronounced political economy "an awful thing" But, as a rule, the younger men, whose convictions on economical subjects were not already stereotyped, were unable to resist the reasoning and the authority of the great Scotch thinker. The impression which the "Wealth of Nations" made upon them may be understood even now by any young politician, who, nursed amidst Conservative traditions, and trained amidst the Conservative surroundings of a great English public school, ventures, on the threshold of his career, before his convictions are confirmed, to open the "Wealth of Nations." The great truths, which will then dawn upon him for the first time, may

[1] Romilly, vol. iii. p. 52; Colchester, vol. ii. p. 71

possibly lead to no immediate change in his habits or in his professed opinions; but they will slowly and surely induce a train of thought, which will gradually undermine the faith of his boyhood; and replace it with a broader and a more generous creed. The light, which may thus break on any youthful Tory now, dawned a century ago on the rising generation. Statesmen, like Pitt, immediately perceived the importance of the truths which were thus revealed to them; other men, with less ability than Pitt, more gradually adopted the conclusions which the leading intellects of their own age accepted as axioms, and a generation, in consequence, arose prepared to dispute the doctrines on which their fathers and forefathers had acted, and to embrace the novel principles of free trade.

The "Wealth of Nations" was published in 1776. At the time of its publication Adam Smith was fifty-three years old. In the same year a much younger man, destined to exercise a considerable influence, published anonymously in London, a "Fragment on Government." Jeremy Bentham, the author of this essay, was born in 1748. Endowed with precocious talents, his education was completed at a period of life when the serious study of most men is only beginning He took his B A. degree in 1763, when he was fifteen, and at once commenced to study for the Bar. His own ability, and the interest of his father—who was a solicitor—pointed to his success in his profession. But Bentham had no inclination towards its active duties. While he was passing through Oxford, Blackstone had been delivering the famous lectures which were afterwards published in the "Commentaries on the Laws of England." Mere boy that he was, Bentham satisfied himself that he detected some fallacies in Blackstone's reasoning. The experience which he gained, and the information which he acquired, while he was studying for the Bar, confirmed these views, and induced him in 1776 to publish his "Fragment on Government." Jeremy Bentham.

The "Fragment on Government" was suggested by a well-known passage in the "Commentaries," in which Blackstone had considered the various forms of government which the

world had known; had dwelt on the peculiar excellences of the English Constitution; and had declared that it was the right and the duty of the supreme power to make laws. Bentham, in his admirably reasoned reply, showed that Blackstone's loose language had, in reality, no meaning whatever. Governments rest on no other foundation than their utility; their so-called right to make laws depends on the utility of the laws they make; the obedience of the subject is again a question of utility; and "it is allowable and incumbent on every man, as well on the score of duty as of interest, to enter into measures of resistance when, according to the best calculation he is able to make, the probable mischiefs of resistance (speaking with respect to the community in general) appear less to him than the probable mischiefs of submission."[1]

A work, containing views of this description, and boldly grappling with the greatest legal writer of the day, naturally attracted considerable attention. It was "variously attributed to Lord Mansfield, Lord Camden, and Lord Ashburton."[2] But exception was roundly taken to the novel doctrine of utility. It is a dangerous doctrine, said Wedderburn, among others. Yes, replied Bentham, it is dangerous; but it is dangerous only to those who profit from a system of government which is not founded on the great principle of utility. "In a government, which had for its end the greatest happiness of the greatest number, Alexander Wedderburn might have been Attorney-General and then Chancellor. But he would not have been Attorney-General with £15,000 a year, nor Chancellor with a Peerage, and with 500 sinecures at his disposal under the name of Ecclesiastical Benefices, besides et ceteras."[3] Though, however, Bentham gave this reply to Wedderburn, Wedderburn's attack induced him to alter his definition. In his "Principles of Morals and Legislation," in which this reply to Wedderburn appeared as a note, instead of referring everything to utility, he based his system on the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The same princip'e

[1] Bentham's *Works*. Edinb. 1843, vol. i. p. 287.
[2] *Encyclopædia Britannica*. [3] Bentham's *Works*, vol. i. p. 3.

had been advocated by Beccaria in Italy, by Bodin in France, and by Hutcheson and Priestley in this country; but it had never been made, as it was Bentham's object to make it, the keystone of a system of jurisprudence.[1] To Bentham's exact mind there was probably no difference between the definition which he thus adopted and the one which he discarded. "That is useful," so he wrote, "which taking all things and all persons into consideration leaves a balance of happiness." But though, in Bentham's logical mind, the change of a phrase made no difference in his argument, the alteration made his meaning much more intelligible to his readers, and "the greatest happiness" principle secured a popularity which the utility principle would probably have never enjoyed.

Bentham's labours were directed to secure the reconstruction of the whole system of jurisprudence. He applied the principle of utility to every subject in succession, endeavouring in each of them, not merely to point out the faults which he detected, but to explain the manner in which they should be remedied in accordance with his principle. Bentham, therefore, at the close of the eighteenth century, was doing for jurisprudence what Adam Smith had already done for commerce. Bentham's works, however, never enjoyed the popularity of Adam Smith's, because the majority of them were not written in the clear style of the great Scotch philosopher. Bentham's earlier essays, indeed, are models of exactness of language and purity of style; but, in his later works, in his efforts to be exact he is occasionally obscure. He uses words, which he is at pains to define, but which ordinary readers hardly understand. He would himself have replied that he did not write for ordinary readers, and that he did not care to be read by those who would not take the trouble to appreciate his meaning. The teacher, however, who will not descend to the level of his disciples will always incur the danger of thinning his school. If it be worth while to write at all, it is certainly worth while

[1] For Hutcheson's claims to the greatest happiness principle, see Mr. Leslie Stephen's *History of English Thought*, vol. ii. p. 61, note. For Bodin's, see Mr. Morley's *Rousseau*, vol. ii. p. 147.

to render the meaning of words as plain and clear as it is possible to make it.

The obscurity of some of Bentham's later works probably accounts for the circumstance that, while the majority of mankind have long ago accepted most of his opinions, they have not given their originator the credit of them. Every one associates free trade with Adam Smith; but few people attribute the reform of the criminal code or the alteration of the Poor Laws to Bentham. The degree of credit, however, which Bentham has obtained is immaterial. The point for observation lies in the circumstance that, five and twenty years before the close of the eighteenth century, two great thinkers in Scotland and England were almost simultaneously questioning the system on which the British Government was founded, and the policy which it had constantly pursued. The views, which Smith and Bentham thus propounded, were almost immediately accepted by some of the younger and more generous of their fellow-countrymen. Yet, notwithstanding their acceptance, they made no impression on the legislature. At the period at which this history opens nearly forty years had passed since the publication of these works. Yet the old commercial system, which Adam Smith had attacked, still flourished. The old views, which Jeremy Bentham had proved erroneous, still animated the legislature.

The circumstance appears, at first sight, more remarkable, because the earlier years of Pitt's administration were distinguished by a disposition to adopt a wiser system. In negotiating a commercial treaty with France, Pitt showed his appreciation of Adam Smith. In supporting Parliamentary Reform he displayed an inclination to accept the "utility" doctrine. Up to 1790 everything pointed to the gradual adoption of the novel principles which Adam Smith and Bentham had applied to legislation. The happy promise, which was thus given to the nation, was almost immediately afterwards broken. The circumstances under which it was broken are familiar to nearly every one. The gross abuses which permeated every depart-

The reaction which prevented the acceptance of the new teaching

ment of government in France led to the great social convulsion, which is known in history as the French Revolution. An infuriated people, suddenly emancipating themselves from an oppressive tyranny, and finding themselves in possession of an almost uncontrolled power, were hurried into excesses which it was impossible to defend. The horror which was thus created produced a reaction in Britain. Contemporary politicians took their stand on old traditions, and refused to receive any new doctrine. The great convulsion, in short, which delivered France for ever from some of the worst features of its government, condemned Britain for another generation to submit to the abuses of the old system.

Burke was, of course, the prominent representative of this reaction. A statesman, whose whole career had been distinguished by admirable efforts to reform and enlighten every department of the Government, was so shocked at the course which Revolution had taken in France as to modify his old opinions, to sacrifice his old friends, and to support a system which in other times he had resolutely opposed. It is immaterial for the present purpose to consider whether, in 1791, Burke's great intellect had or had not been weakened by affliction and disease [1] In this place Burke is merely regarded as the leading spokesman of an influential portion of the nation. The feelings which Burke expressed in Parliament were largely shared by other classes. They influenced the thoughts, the habits, and the writings of Englishmen for twenty years, and thus continued for the whole of that period the remarkable reaction which commenced with the outbreak of the French Revolution

It is possible to trace the violence of the storm, which was thus raised, in nearly every branch of English literature. Up to the outbreak of the French Revolution, Smith and Bentham had been calmly examining the various questions of policy and government with which they were occupied. After the outbreak of the Revolution, none but the steadiest thinkers

[1] Most people will recollect Buckle's beautiful apology for Burke on this score.—*Hist. of Civilisation*, vol i. p 476.

were able to preserve their equilibrium, and political writers were hurried either, like Burke, into a violent attack on the change in France; or, like Paine and Godwin, into as violent an attack on the things which were held specially sacred. Amidst the excitement of the moment the gravest thinkers became partisan writers. It was, in such circumstances, inevitable that men, like Paine and Godwin, should rush into a defence of the events which Burke so uncompromisingly attacked, and that they should propose to reconstruct society on new principles. But the doctrines of these writers only increased the horror with which the Revolution was already regarded by the more influential section of British society. By attacking the traditions, which had hitherto been regarded with an unfailing reverence, Godwin appeared to be loosening the bands by which society was held together. By coarsely assailing the books of Scripture, Paine seemed to be destroying the basis on which religion was founded. The "Political Justice" of the one author, the "Age of Reason" of the other, thus intensified the reaction against the principles which they supported, and convinced the nation of the necessity of combating a revolution which Burke had condemned and which Pitt was attacking.[1]

For some years, then, after the French Revolution broke out, the passions, by which men of all classes were agitated, proved unfavourable either for patient inquiry or for careful thought. The recollection of republican excesses was, however, gradually effaced amidst the stirring events by which the Revolution was succeeded; and men, forgetting the extravagances of Godwin and Paine, were able again to devote themselves to speculation and research. Towards the close of the eighteenth century Malthus published his essay on

[1] The intensity of the reaction, which accordingly occurred, may be measured by the circumstance that Paine's "Rights of Man" formed the ground of his prosecution for high treason, and that the book is even now spoken of as if it were detestable or dangerous. It may be safely affirmed that, if the "Rights of Man" were published now, the book would be universally regarded as a singularly able political treatise, always admirable in manner, and almost always unobjectionable in matter. The "Age of Reason," however, is a very different book.

the "Principles of Population." All animals, he showed, had a tendency to increase at a rate of geometrical progression. Their food could not be increased at a greater rate than that of arithmetical progression. A thousand persons, doubling their numbers in every quarter of a century, would multiply to 16,000 in a hundred years. Their food, during the same period, would be increased fourfold. It was impossible, therefore, for man to go on multiplying at the natural rate of increase. The multiplication was checked by preventive and positive checks. In the early stages of society, the positive checks of famine, war, and disease were in operation. In the later stages, prudential considerations, which Malthus regarded as preventive checks, produced the same effects. It followed from this reasoning that the most populous countries were not necessarily the happiest; and that the men who refrained from marrying might possibly be as good citizens as those who married and had large families. These views were received with a burst of indignation at the time at which they were first published. Starving curates, with large families of starving children, had no patience with a writer who ascribed their misfortunes to their own improvidence. Employers of labour, whose interests depended on the continuance of low wages, resulting from an overstocked labour market, objected to a philosophy which pointed to an era of dear labour. Even subsequent generations, compelled to accept Malthus's conclusions, have hardly forgiven the writer, who has convinced them against their will; and ignorant people still speak of Malthusian philosophy as if there was something shocking about it. Malthus.

Ricardo's great work was published nearly twenty years after the "Principles of Population." Ricardo was of Jewish extraction, and engaged during some years of his life in commercial pursuits. He embraced, however, the doctrines of Christianity, and sealed his allegiance to his new faith by marrying a Christian. Amassing a large fortune in business, he decided on exchanging commerce for politics, and entered the House of Commons as member for the Irish Ricardo.

borough of Portarlington. The position, which he gained there, will be seen in later chapters of this work. The present chapter is only concerned with his contributions to political economy. Malthus had addressed himself to a problem which Adam Smith had not noticed. Ricardo had the merit of correcting one of the few defects in the "Wealth of Nations." Adam Smith had concluded that the price of corn was dependent on three things—the wages of labour, the profits of the farmer, and the rent of land The doctrine had been doubted at the time by Hume, the historian, and Anderson, the well-known author of the "History of Commerce." But these doubts were forgotten, and Adam Smith's conclusions were generally accepted, till their erroneous nature was finally demonstrated by Ricardo. Rent is, in reality, the surplus profit which any given land, either from the convenience of its situation or from the fertility of its soil, yields over the worst land in cultivation The worst land in cultivation pays no rent. This conclusion is now accepted by all reasonable men. In 1816 it had not been realised by even the foremost thinkers of the age.

At the close of the great war, then, four thinkers of unusual power had demonstrated the falsity of the old doctrines which politicians of all classes had previously accepted. Adam Smith, the greatest of the four, had exposed the follies of the old system of protection Jeremy Bentham had, almost at the same time, attacked the whole system of jurisprudence. Twenty years afterwards Malthus had, for the first time, explained the principles which govern the multiplication of mankind; while, at a still later date, Ricardo had expounded the true theories of Rent. The conclusions of all these great writers had been unfavourable to the system, which the governing classes had hitherto pursued, and to the influence of the landed interest. Adam Smith had exposed the folly of protecting any one class at the expense of others. Bentham, carrying the principle into jurisprudence, had based his polity on the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Malthus's reasoning had pointed to a preference for dear wages; and Ricardo

had represented the landlords as monopolists, appropriating the surplus profits of the soil. These great truths, authoritatively propounded for the first time, were generally accepted by the younger portion of the nation. Their influence may be clearly traced in the legislation of the succeeding thirty years; and the history of Britain, during this period, cannot be thoroughly understood by any one who omits to notice the impression which these four men had made on the minds which were ripening into manhood at the conclusion of the war.

The conditions, which characterised the philosophical writings of the age under review, were also visible in other branches of contemporary literature. Up to the period in which Adam Smith was writing, the history of Britain had never been related by a British historian. Hume and Robertson supplied the deficiency: the former relating the annals of the English; the latter, in his shorter history, the fortunes of the Scottish nation. The example, which these writers afforded, was soon followed, and Gibbon produced the work which most competent judges still regard as the greatest history in the English language. Gibbon wrote in the same generation as Hume; but there is a broad distinction between the treatment of their subjects by these two authors. Hume, the earlier of the two, desired to write a classical work. He completed his task in a period which made elaborate research impossible; and his history, excellent as a work of art, does not display any particular desire, on its author's part, to investigate and analyse original authorities.[1] Gibbon, on the contrary, before he attempted his history decided on "reviewing the Latin classics under the four divisions of historians, poets, orators, and philosophers, in a chronological series from the days of Plautus and Sallust to the decline of the language and empire of Rome."[2] The laborious task, which he thus set himself to perform, distinctly proves how thoroughly he identi-

Historical literature

[1] See on this point some remarks by Brougham in *Men of Letters and Science*, p. 211.

[2] See Gibbon's own autobiography. The passage in the text is also quoted in *Ann. Reg.*, 1756, p. 336.

fied himself with the spirit of research which was one of the distinguishing features of the closing years of the eighteenth century. William Mitford, who, at the commencement of the nineteenth century, was the fashionable historian of Greece, in one respect resembled Gibbon. Like Gibbon, he examined for himself the entire range of Greek literature, and founded his history on original authorities. Unlike Gibbon, however, his style was unequal and occasionally bad. At his best he is pure, simple, and clear; at his worst he is involved and unintelligible. He lays himself open to the charge that he is translating Greek, instead of writing English.[1] But his history is open to a more serious charge The first volume of the work was published in 1784, the second in 1790; the others at various dates between 1790 and 1810. The later volumes of the work were, therefore, composed amidst the excitement which the French Revolution occasioned. It was inevitable that Mitford should be moved by the storm around him His brother, the first Lord Redesdale, was one of the ablest of Tory lawyers, and one of the most vigorous advocates of Tory principles. Mitford, sharing his brother's views, felt his apprehensions of the consequences of the Revolution. His feelings immediately found expression in his history. His first volume, published before the Revolution occurred, contains a passage on Draco's legislation which reads like an extract from Romilly,[2] but in his third volume, written amidst the passions which the Revolution had provoked, he expressed his conviction of "the inherent weakness and indelible barbarism of democratical governments."[3] A writer who could express such views as these was ill-fitted to write a philosophic history of the Greek republics. In his own lifetime, indeed, his opinions increased the popularity of his work; but they insured its supercession in a later age. Thirlwall and Grote were educated under circumstances differing from those amidst which Mitford had lived. With equal ability and equal

Mitford.

[1] See, for instance, the account of the attack on Platæa, vol. iii. p. 79.

[2] The passage in question, explaining the follies of a severe penal code, is well worth referring to. See vol. i. p 392.

[3] *History*, vol iii p. 100.

industry they embraced other views. Grote occupies the position which Mitford once filled; and a Liberal age praises and reads the liberal writer, and neglects the industrious Tory who preceded him in his task.

It was Hallam's good fortune to be born at a later date than Mitford. Before he grew up to manhood the agitation, which the Revolution had occasioned, had been allayed. His mind was, therefore, free from the feelings by which Mitford was disturbed, and every topic which occupied his time was dealt with by him with the judicial calmness for which he was eminently distinguished. No great historian ever wrote with less passion, or was more anxious than Hallam to place the whole of his facts for what they were worth, before his readers. In this respect Hallam displays a marked contrast to Mitford. In elaborate research he was at least Mitford's equal. The long intervals at which his three great works were produced afford some indication of the pains which he devoted to their preparation. The "History of the Middle Ages" was published in 1818, the "Constitutional History of England" in 1827, the "Literature of Europe" in 1837. It may be doubted whether three works of any other author contain the results of such extensive, varied, and careful reading The same spirit of research which characterised the concluding years of the eighteenth century is remarkably visible in the works of Hallam. But Hallam also unconsciously owed much to the writers who immediately preceded him. It was natural that Hume, writing in the middle of the eighteenth century, should endeavour to found his history on a classic model, and to produce a book which should be admired as a work of art. It was equally natural that Hallam, writing at the commencement of the nineteenth century, after the publication of the commentaries, and in the lifetime of Bentham, should examine the constitutional questions which Hume had neglected, but which Blackstone's labours, Bentham's criticisms, and the efforts of Reformers in Parliament had all tended to raise into importance. The period at which he wrote was favourable for the dispassionate consideration of these matters; and Hallam,

Hallam.

therefore, may be cited, like Ricardo, to prove that, towards the close of the war, the calmest minds were escaping from the influences which had disturbed their predecessors, and were again devoting themselves to quiet investigation.

It is probably possible to show that the other historical writers of the period were influenced by the same circumstances as those which affected Hallam and Mitford. Turner, for instance, the historian of the Anglo-Saxons, is remarkable for the diligence with which he investigated the details of early English life. A defective style is perhaps the chief cause which has interfered with the continued popularity of his work. James Mill, on the contrary, the historian of India, was full of the new ideas which the Revolution had created. His history is an elaborate attack on the policy of the East India Company. In this way Mill may be said to have represented the new school of thought to which the closing years of the eighteenth century gave birth; Turner, the Conservative reaction, which was the immediate consequence of revolutionary violence The most remarkable instance, however, of the effects of the Revolution is to be found in the case of Mackintosh In one sense Mackintosh can hardly be regarded as an historian; in another sense he is the most philosophic historian that ever lived. He accomplished so little that his fame rests on a small basis, but the little which he accomplished is remarkable for so much knowledge, research, and discrimination, that his studies deserve especial attention. A Scotchman by birth, Mackintosh was educated in an atmosphere peculiarly favourable to careful thought. Born in 1765, he grew up to manhood whilst Adam Smith was producing the "Wealth of Nations." He was originally intended for the medical profession, and he did not change his plans, and decide on studying for the English bar, till he was more than twenty-four years of age. He arrived in London on the eve of the French Revolution; but he arrived with views which were already formed, and which were not liable to be easily disturbed by the force of popular passion. The Revolution occurred; and Mackintosh, like Paine, endeavoured to reply to Burke's reflections upon

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it. Paine had addressed the "Rights of Man" to the middle orders of society; Mackintosh intended his "Vindiciæ Gallicæ" to be read by thinkers like himself. His thoughtful work gained him at once a very great reputation; it apparently marked him out for a high position in the ranks of the Whig party. Yet Mackintosh had hardly won his first success, and defeated Burke, as his admirers declared, in argument, when he began to doubt the justice of his own conclusions. He quailed, as Burke had quailed before him, at the excesses of the Revolution; declared that he had been seduced by the love of what he had thought liberty, that he had been undeceived by a melancholy experience; and that he had been the dupe of his own enthusiasm.[1] Once convinced of the error of his previous conclusions, his course was rapid; till he, at last, brought himself to admit that he had no zeal for anything except the destruction of the French Revolution.[2]

Little or no attention has hitherto been paid to the remarkable alteration which was thus effected in Mackintosh's opinions. Yet the change is one of the most noteworthy that ever occurred in the mind of man. That the ablest defender of the French Revolution should have no zeal for anything but the ruin of the cause, which he had won his spurs in upholding, is even more singular than the conduct of Burke, in the evening of his days, on the same subject. The force of a reaction, which induced Mackintosh to reverse his published opinions, must have been great indeed. Mackintosh's subsequent career, however, makes the change seem all the more remarkable. At the beginning of the nineteenth century he accepted the Recordership of Bombay, and consequently retired for a few years of his life to the comparative quiet of a residence in India. In India he was removed from the agitations which had influenced his opinions, and was able to resume the habits of study and thought which were his chief solace. He returned from India in 1811, and accepted a seat in Parliament. But it was soon evident that, in the interval of his Indian office, he had forgotten the fears with which Revolution had inspired him, and had reverted

[1] See his letter to Burke in Mackintosh, vol. i. p. 87. [2] Ibid., p. 143.

to his original opinions. His was the voice which was raised the loudest, and which was heard most frequently, in defence of Revolution in South America. He was the statesman who was the foremost opponent to the Foreign Enlistment Act, and who desired to allow the rebel colonists to carry on the war against Spain from the shores of this country. His later opinions, in short, were reconcilable with the views which he had commenced his career by propounding They were irreconcilable with the opinions which his horror of Revolutionary excesses made him temporarily adopt in his middle age.

Mackintosh, then, represents in his own person three distinct phases of thought. He began his life full of the liberal philosophy which men like Bentham were proclaiming. He participated in the reaction which was occasioned by Revolutionary excess, and he ultimately reverted to the old philosophic habits and Liberal tendencies which had distinguished his earlier career. No other of his leading contemporaries followed so closely the successive changes of opinion which distinguished this remarkable period of history; but nearly all of them felt more or less acutely the force of the passions which the Revolution in France had excited. This circumstance, it is believed, will be much more apparent on a review of the imaginative authors who lived and wrote at the same time. A poet, indeed, in ordinary times, is probably less influenced than any other person by political passions. But, when a poet does feel the force of a great popular movement, he feels it more acutely than his other contemporaries, because he is more impressionable than they are. It is easy to see now that many circumstances pointed to a great revival of poetry at the close of the eighteenth century, but that the direction which the revival would assume was doubtful. The great intellectual activity which characterised the period was almost certain to produce the rise of a new author of works of imagination. The intellectual movement was most visible in Scotland, and Scotland accordingly led the way in rescuing poetry from the degraded position to which Pope's imitators had consigned it. In metaphysics Scotland produced Hume and Reid; in

Revival of poetry.

history, Hume and Robertson; in physics, Black and Hutton; in physiology, Hunter; and in poetry, Burns. The sturdy strength of Burns's language did more than the most polished criticism could have done to demonstrate the inherent weakness of the smooth poetry of the day. Here was a poet, without culture, without finish, clothing his vigorous thoughts in vigorous language, and employing the almost unintelligible words which he had learned "bousing at the nappy" and following the plough. Yet the first edition of his works secured his popularity. The Cotter's Saturday Night, Tam o'Shanter's rollicking ride, the Jolly Beggar's carouse, the exquisite lines to his dead Mary, proved the variety of his fertile genius, and justified the popularity which his writings at once acquired. The vigorous and beautiful poetry which Burns thus produced gave men a new standard of criticism. The decasyllabic metre, which Pope had made fashionable, was at once discarded, and most of the great writers of the period adopted either original or other styles.

There is, indeed, one poet, who forms an exception to this rule. Crabbe was born in 1754, his earliest poem, "The Library," was published in 1781; and, though his literary life extended till 1819, his style was formed before Burns's vigorous language had revolutionised poetry. He could not escape from the groove in which his ideas moved, and he continued till the close of his life composing the jingling decasyllabic verse which he had made popular at the beginning of it. His poems were the natural consequence of his position in life. He was born at Aldborough, a town which is now rising into a dreary watering place, but which was then a little fishing hamlet, returning two members to Parliament. Abandoning medicine, for which he had originally been designed, for literature, he was ordained; accepted in the first instance the curacy of his native borough, and afterwards some desirable pieces of preferment which the Duke of Rutland's partiality obtained for him. His usual method, in writing poetry, was to string together a variety of stories which he had learned in the ordinary rounds of a country parish. Every one of his parishioners was, in his

Crabbe.

eyes, a hero; every village lass a heroine. This one had married for money, and had been unhappy; this other had married for love, and was happy. One man wanted a family, and had no children; another had a troop of children and no money. One pretty girl had been seduced and deserted by a villain; another had resisted temptation and had married happily in her own rank of life. Simple stories of this kind could, of course, be collected in every almshouse and every cottage. Crabbe strung them together in rhythmical couplets and called them poetry. The generation in which he wrote read, approved, and admired them. But the poems, after all, were not poetry, but mere tales in rhyme. There was nothing but the metre to distinguish them from prose.

The critic who desires to understand the nature of the great poetical revival which took place towards the close of the eighteenth century cannot do better than compare the verses of Crabbe with the poetry of Burns. But the critic, who wishes to appreciate the remarkable effect of the French Revolution on literature, should contrast the sentiments which Burns expressed with those of his two immediate successors—Campbell and Scott. Burns, who died in 1796, and whose greatest poems had been all composed in or before 1793, never lived to feel the reaction which Revolutionary excesses in France produced in so many quarters. He died, as he lived, a strong republican; and, though his famous toast, "Here's to the last verse of the last chapter of the last book of Kings," possibly admits of a different construction from that which is ordinarily put upon it,[1] it seems certain that the noble lines, "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," owe their inspiration as much to Burns's enthusiasm for Revolution in France, as to his admiration of Wallace's efforts for the cause of Scottish liberty. Campbell and Scott, on the contrary, commenced their poetical careers after the outbreak of the French Revolution. Both of them felt the convulsion which

[1] The last verse of the last book of Kings is, "And his allowance was a continual allowance given him by the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life."

was shaking society to the centre. Scott, a Conservative by temperament, would in any circumstances have supported the war which Pitt had undertaken against France. Campbell, a Liberal by conviction, would have been, a few years earlier, in favour of the uprising of a people against the abuses of a government, and the tyranny of the upper orders. Regret at the fall of liberty in Poland inspired, perhaps, the noblest passage in his longest poem. In "Gertrude of Wyoming" his sympathies are with the Americans in rebellion against England. But the excesses of Revolution, and the ambition of Napoleon, convinced him that the cause of liberty was the cause of England. Thus in Campbell's verse Britain is the land of freedom, and the navy's glory is shared by all Britons. It is recorded that, on one occasion, his enthusiasm for the cause of liberty exposed him to some suspicion. He was arrested, and his papers were seized. But the sheriff, who made the arrest, found in the poet's travelling case the few lines "Ye Mariners of England," which are perhaps the most heart-stirring national verses in the language. No better refutation could have been given to the unworthy suspicions which had been cast on the author.

Campbell, then, though full of the generous ideas which he must have learned in his boyhood, was ardent in his enthusiastic support of the war with France in which his country was engaged. Scott, from his Conservative temperament, was equally in favour of the war. But he regarded it from a totally different standpoint. He wished for the success of Britain because Britain was his country, just as, a few centuries before, he would have wished for the success of Scotland in her struggles with England. It was the cause of liberty which was inspiring Campbell: it was the cause of Britain which was inspiring Scott. Hence, probably, arose a remarkable distinction between the nationality of Scott and the nationality of Campbell. There is hardly a line in Campbell to show that he is a Scotchman. "Ye mariners of England, that guard our native seas;" "And England sent her men of men the chief;" "Now, joy, old England, raise,

Scott.

for the tidings of thy might," "Steer, helmsman, till you steer our way by stars beyond the line. we go to found a realm, one day, like England's self to shine," are a few examples of the many which might be quoted to prove that, in Campbell's verse, his individuality as a Scotchman is almost always merged in his nationality as an Englishman. But Scott, on the contrary, never forgets he is a Scotchman. "It is the harp of the North" which he desires to waken. It is of the old times and old manners, before "a stranger filled the Stuarts' throne," that the latest minstrel sung He cannot avoid the passing wish that "Flodden had been Bannockburn." The hero of his first novel is an Englishman, but an Englishman who, amidst Scotch surroundings, strikes a blow for Prince Charlie at Prestonpans. In his noble lines on the death of Pitt and Fox, he cannot resist saying—

> "If ever from an English heart,
> Oh, *here*, let prejudice depart:
> And partial feeling cast aside,
> Record that Fox a Briton died"

This distinction between the two authors was the inevitable consequence of their different dispositions A Scotchman who was a Conservative was sure to dwell upon the old rivalries of the Scotch and English; while a Scotchman who was a Liberal was as certain to remember that the thoughts and interests of the two nations had become identical. Scott, to the end of his life, was never able to free himself entirely from the old Scotch feeling George IV., indeed, won his heart; but then George IV. put on a Stuart tartan in Edinburgh. The only occasion on which Scott seriously attempted to interfere with politics was on the attempt of Parliament to extend to Scotland a measure of currency reform which it was applying to England.

The intense love of his own country which is perceptible in all of Scott's works accounts, however, for much of their beauty and much of their popularity. He saw Scotland as no one had ever seen it before. Up to the time at which he wrote there was no general taste for scenery. It is a striking observation of a forgotten writer, which has been reproduced

by Mackintosh, that "there is no single term in Greek or Latin for prospect." "So recent is the taste for scenery," wrote Mackintosh on another occasion, "that a tour through Great Britain, published in 1762, speaks of Westmoreland as remarkable only for wildness, notices Winandermere only for its size, Ulleswater for char, and at Keswick passes the poor lake entirely."[1] There is hardly a line in Burns to show that he had any appreciation for the grander features of his native land: his most exquisite imagery is taken from objects found in lowland as well as in upland—a mountain daisy, a mouse, a field of poppies. Scott, on the contrary, forgets the daisy in looking at the bolder features in the landscape. He is the Turner among poets. His heroes and heroines move among the lovely valleys of his native land, or sail along the sublime coast of Western Scotland; but they are only the accompaniments to the landscape, the figures in the foreground of the painter. Scott's works have, in consequence, become a guide-book to Scotland, and have taken thousands of visitors to the borderland in which he lived and wrote.

Scott's antiquarian tastes saved him from feeling the shock of the Revolution so acutely as other writers. He may be said to have represented all that was best in the Conservatism of the period in which he wrote Three other writers, his friends and contemporaries, were moved by the remarkable reaction to which Burke and Mackintosh succumbed. Southey is the most prominent example of the effects of this reaction. He had begun life as a Radical; he had written a short drama, "Wat Tyler," in which he had openly advocated Radical principles. "Curse on these taxes!" says Hob Carter, in this play: "one succeeds another".—

Southey

> "Our ministers, panders of a king's will,
> Drain all our wealth away, to fill their armies
> And feed the crows of France. Year follows year,
> And still we madly prosecute the war
> Draining our wealth, distressing our poor peasants,
> Slaughtering our youths—and all to crown our chiefs
> With glory!—I detest the hell-sprung name"

[1] Mackintosh, vol. ii. pp. 97, 126.

This wild declamation was written in 1794, when Britain was at war with France. About four years afterwards, Southey composed the much better known lines on the battle of Blenheim :—

"Now tell us what 'twas all about,"
Young Peterkin, he cries;
And little Wilhelmine looks up
With wonder-waiting eyes.
"Now tell us all about the war,
And what they fought each other for."

"It was the English," Kaspar cried,
"Who put the French to rout
But what they fought each other for
I could not well make out.
But everybody said," quoth he,
"That 'twas a famous victory."

. . . . .

"Why, 'twas a very wicked thing,"
Said little Wilhelmine
"Nay, nay, my little girl," quoth he,
"It was a famous victory"

. . . . .

"But what good came of it at last?"
Quoth little Peterkin.
"Why, that I cannot tell," said he,
"But 'twas a famous victory."

It is evident, from these extracts, that, up to the close of the eighteenth century, Southey still retained his earlier opinions, and detested the French war. But, in the nineteenth century, all his opinions were altered. Instead of counselling peace, he desired the prolongation of the struggle.

"Who counsels peace at this momentous hour?"

he exclaimed in 1814.

"Woe, woe to England! woe and endless shame,
If this heroic land,
False to her feelings and unspotted fame,
Hold out the olive to the tyrant's hand."

Hob Carter's reasoning and little Wilhelmine's objections were both forgotten: Napoleon's victories had done more than all the Revolutionary excesses, and had made the poet of peace-at-any-price the fiery advocate of the war. His old friends, the

Radicals, still retained their former opinions, and desired peace. Southey, therefore, had no alternative but to join the Tory party. The violence of his earlier Radicalism was soon effaced by the fury of his later Toryism. His language towards Napoleon was simply brutal:—

> "Too cold upon the road was he;
> Too hot had he been at Moscow;
> But colder and hotter he may be,
> For the grave is colder than Muscovy;
> And a place there is to be kept in view,
> Where the fire is red and the brimstone blue."

The indecency of these lines is, however, less marked than the profanity of the "Vision of Judgment."

Southey's contemporaries had no words to express their scorn for his conversion to Toryism.

> "And now, my epic renegade, what are ye at?"

says Byron, in "Don Juan."

> "He had written praises of a regicide;
> He had written praises of all kings whatever;
> He had written for republics far and wide,
> And then against them bitterer than ever.
> . . . . . .
> He had sung against all battles, and again
> In their high praise and glory."

So Byron wrote on another occasion. In one sense this charge was unjust. Southey, in passing over from the extreme of Radicalism to the Tory party, was in reality only a type of the reaction which affected many others of his contemporaries. Vainer than most of them, his conversion was later than theirs. More violent than most of them, it was much more thorough.

Southey's name is usually associated with that of the two other lake poets—as they are called—Wordsworth and Coleridge. The career of the three authors was, in many respects, very similar. All three began life as Liberals. All three were induced, either by the effects of the Revolution or by the results of the war, to change their opinions and become Tories. Coleridge, who was closely connected with Southey by marriage, seems to have passed through the

Coleridge.

same phases of thought as his kinsman. But it is less easy to follow Coleridge than to follow Southey, because it is more difficult to appreciate the full meaning of his conclusions. He loved to be mysterious and obscure; and this mystery and obscurity is constantly visible in his most beautiful poetry. Why was the Ancient Mariner to be doomed to perpetual misery because he had shot an albatross? Why was the exquisitely pure Lady Christabel to be cursed for the performance of an act of Christian charity? The argument offends the reason as much as the language charms the sense. The same mystery which pervades the writer's poetry is to be found in his political writings. In the course of 1817 Southey and Coleridge both wrote to the Prime Minister to protest against the seditious writings of the time. Southey's letter was characteristically plain. "Make transportation the punishment" of seditious writings was the advice of the author of "Wat Tyler." Coleridge apparently meant to say the same thing. For he told Lord Liverpool that "the fan is still in the hand," and went on, instead of concluding the text, to pray God that his lordship might carry out "the necessary process in meekness." But the minister confessed that he could not "well understand" the poet's long letter; and probably every one, who has since read Lord Liverpool's memoirs, has equally failed to understand it.[1] The mystery, then, in Coleridge's language makes it difficult to follow his changes of opinion; but amidst all the mystery it is evident that, like Southey, he began life as a Liberal, and that, like Southey, he abandoned his old friends, and altered his old principles.

Wordsworth

It ought to be possible to follow the growth of Wordsworth's mind much more accurately than that of either Southey or Coleridge. In the "Prelude" the author has related the story of his life, and has examined the various phases of his thoughts. He was born in the Lake Country; and in due course was sent to Cambridge. He visited London, he made a tour in France, and felt—as far as his calm temperament was capable of feeling—the stir of the Revolution. The

[1] For the letter see *Liverpool*, vol. ii. pp. 298–307.

Revolution, in the words of Mr. Myers, "seemed to him big with all the hopes of man." He returned to England "a patriot of the world": he brought with him

> "The faith
> That, if France prospered, good men would not long
> Pay fruitless worship to humanity."

He felt the first shock to his moral nature—

> "When in arms
> Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,
> Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate powers."

And his feelings were so strong that he rejoiced—

> "Yea, afterwards—truth most painful to record—
> Exulted in the triumph of my soul
> When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
> Left without glory on the field, or driven,
> Brave hearts! to shameful flight"

There is nothing in the poetry of Burns or even in the "Rights of Man" comparable with this confession of Wordsworth. In his ardour for liberty, the patriot of the world was prepared to sacrifice his own country. Yet the events of the next few years produced the effect upon him which modified the opinions of so many others of his contemporaries. He saw, or fancied that he saw, that nothing could be expected from a Revolution which had been distinguished for violence and bloodshedding—

> "Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth
> March firmly towards righteousness and peace,"

and, during the next few years, he composed the succession of Sonnets dedicated to Nature's Independence and Liberty, in which France appears

> "Impatient to put out the only light
> Of liberty that yet remains on earth,"

while "earth's best hopes" are centred in England.

The preceding remarks will probably be sufficient to prove that many of the poets of the period participated in the reaction which Revolutionary excess and European war provoked among all classes of Englishmen. Scott represents the calm

Conservatism which would have disapproved revolution under any shape or at any period; Campbell, like Mackintosh, the small section of Liberals, whose affection for their country exceeded even their love for their opinions; Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, the reaction against Revolutionary extravagance. There were, however, three poets, one of whom was endowed with greater talents than any of those who have been mentioned, who were affected in other ways by the stirring events of the times in which they lived. Chronologically Moore ranks as the first of these. Moore's thoughts naturally rested on other subjects than those with which his contemporaries were occupied. He was an Irishman. His father was a Roman Catholic tradesman in Dublin. He grew up to manhood during the most critical period of Irish history. While a mere child his country achieved a legislative independence. Before he had reached man's estate the Rebellion of 1798 had deluged it with blood. Moore became the biographer of the unfortunate young nobleman who was one of the most conspicuous leaders in this revolt. Revolution, in his eyes, was a totally different thing from revolution in the eyes of Campbell and Southey. They associated it with the scenes in Paris, which had shocked a continent. He associated it with the yearnings of his fellow-countrymen for freedom from Saxon rule. In Moore's verse a rebel is always a hero The Peri tries to open the gates of Paradise with the last drop of blood shed by the last defender of his country's liberties:—

Moore.

"Oh, if there be on this earthly sphere,
A boon, an offering heaven holds dear,
'Tis the last libation Liberty draws
From the heart that bleeds and breaks in her cause."

Hafed, the hero of the Fire worshippers, is a rebel against Mussulman rule. Hinda, the daughter of the Moslem chieftain, is taught to regard him as a monster in human shape. She falls in with the so-called monster, and passionately loves the man. No one, however, can avoid perceiving that, while Moore was writing of Persia and Hafed, he was in reality

thinking of Ireland and Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The poem is an eloquent appeal for the heroes of 1798.

If Moore had remained in Ireland, the passionate love which he felt for his country and her wrongs would probably have driven him into violent invective against her oppressors. Instead of remaining in Ireland, he came to London. In London his admirable social qualities introduced him to the best society, and made him an universal favourite He could not avoid perceiving that the relentless persecutors of his unfortunate fellow-countrymen had, after all, various good qualities, and that many of them were just as anxious to relieve the Irish from religious disabilities as the poet was himself In consequence, instead of becoming violent, he occupied his time in laughing at the peculiarities of Castlereagh's confused sentences and in composing the beautiful melodies which gave every one an enduring interest in Ireland In this way he not only produced the most exquisite songs in the language, but he concurrently composed some of the best satires that were ever written. Birth had made Moore an advocate for rebellion. Society had stripped his advocacy of it of every shadow of bitterness.

Very different was the course of two of his contemporaries. Byron is probably the greatest poet that Britain has produced since the days of Dryden. He is, perhaps, the most thorough master of words that ever lived His most beautiful passages bear comparison with the noblest poetry in the language, and his longest poems, full of faults as they are, are magnificent monuments to his genius. Byron was a younger man than any of the writers who have been mentioned in this chapter. His first poetry, the "Hours of Idleness," was published in 1807, his first important poem, the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," in 1810 It is important to bear these dates in mind. The remarkable reaction against republican excess, which affected almost every great writer at the close of the eighteenth century, had lost its force before Byron began to write. Men were no longer afraid of Revolutionary violence because a powerful autocrat had a firm hold

Byron

on the French people. Men were no longer afraid of French conquest, because the British navy had obtained an indisputable supremacy at sea Great writers were, in consequence, enabled to resume the thread of thought which the Revolution had snapped, and to revert to the extreme opinions which the Encyclopædists had made fashionable in France, and which Godwin and Paine had endeavoured twenty years before to propagate in this country. Byron would probably, in any circumstances, have embraced the Liberal opinions which were again becoming fashionable, but his disposition to do so was increased by two circumstances, which influenced his whole career. The first of these was the reception which was given to his little volume of early poetry. The *Edinburgh Review* was at that time in its infancy, and could not resist the pleasure of crushing a peer who had ventured to become an author in his teens An article, which is attributed to Brougham, criticised with more venom than justice the youthful author's poetry, and would probably have discouraged ninety-nine men out of every hundred from any fresh attempt at authorship. Byron, instead of being discouraged, turned fiercely on the Reviewer. The "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" was his reply to the offensive article The public were delighted with a poem every line of which sparkled with sarcasm. But they hardly appreciated at the time the violence of the change which had produced the satire. A single article had made Byron declare war against society He had shaken the dust off his feet and departed from his "hapless" country.

> "The time hath been when no harsh sound would fall
> From lips that now may seem imbued with gall
> But now so callous grown, so changed since youth,
> I've learned to think, and sternly speak the truth,
> Learned to deride the critic's starch decree,
> And break him on the wheel he meant for me;
> To spurn the rod a scribbler bids me kiss,
> Nor care if courts and crowds applaud or hiss."

The attack of the *Edinburgh Review* had made Byron declare war against society But his bitterness was also increased by the state of his purse. He had not sufficient

money to support the position to which he thought himself entitled by his birth; and he was too proud to submit to the humiliations to which poverty exposed him. He determined to travel; and his voluntary separation from his own countrymen only increased his bitterness. He returned home, and married Miss Milbanke. His marriage, if it had proved a happy one, might have reconciled him to society. Its unfortunate termination only increased his bitterness with the world. He again wandered forth with the feelings of an outcast, and avenged himself by offending a decorous public by the indecency and profanity of his poetry.

A reckless disregard of the ordinary amenities of life is one of the most striking characteristics of Byron's poetry. The author of "Parisina" and "Don Juan" had no care for what the public thought of him; but the same indifference to public opinion is visible in his political writings. England's greatest general, Wellington, is "Villainton," her most prominent statesman, Castlereagh, is "a wretch never named but with curses and jeers," her king is the "fourth of the fool and oppressors called George." Her Church is weeping over her tithes, her country gentlemen living "for rent." But, amidst his passionate hatred of the upper classes, and his sincere desire to promote the cause of liberty, he had no particular anxiety for the liberty of his own fellow-countrymen He once declared in the House of Lords that the situation of an English labourer was much more miserable than that of a Greek, yet he made no effort for the English rustic. he sacrificed his life to the cause of Greece. His country had no claims on his affections. His most generous efforts were devoted to the beautiful land which he first saw with the marks of recent death imprinted on its loveliness, and into which he succeeded in infusing some portion of its former spirit.

Shelley.

There is a marked resemblance between the career of Shelley and that of Byron. Both were descended from ancient families. Both of them were educated in the Conservative atmosphere of public schools and

universities—Byron at Harrow and Cambridge, Shelley at Eton and Oxford. Both of them were trained under conditions opposed to the adoption of Radical principles. Both of them were married at a comparatively early age, and both of them soon separated from their wives. Both of them were remarkable for their reckless disregard of public opinion, and for the license with which they attacked every political, social, and religious institution.

Shelley, who was born in 1792, was four years younger than Byron. Like Byron, therefore, he grew up to manhood when the violence of the reaction against Revolutionary excess was already spent There was nothing in the political situation to counteract the tendency to adopt republican principles which he at once displayed But the fervour with which he advocated unpopular views, both in religion and politics, was increased by the events of his life Many an Oxford undergraduate, besides Shelley, may possibly have been satisfied that atheism was a necessity. But the burst of wrath, which Shelley's published opinions excited, was probably responsible for confirming a view which must, at his time of life, have been only hastily formed Many other young men have had the folly to elope with girls for whom they had no durable affection But Shelley's poverty, his father's anger, his own unhappiness at home, his subsequent connection with Mary Godwin, and his wife's unfortunate death, all combined to ostracise him from society. His extreme principles were made much more violent by the concurrent influences of these circumstances, and the slight restraint which intercourse with society might have imposed upon him was removed Mary Godwin's influence too must necessarily have increased the young poet's disposition to declare war against all the traditions of his own class The daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, she had grown up to womanhood amidst the new faith, which both her parents had adopted. Her connection, and subsequent marriage, with Shelley form the brightest page in the poet's domestic life; but her influence must have been in many respects injurious to him

Such were the circumstances under which Shelley lived and wrote. His language, in dealing with politics, is even more violent than that of Byron.

> "Men of England, wherefore plough
> For the lords, who lay ye low?
> Wherefore weave with toil and care
> The rich robes your tyrants wear?"

is the question which he addressed to the men of England in the year of the Manchester Massacre.

> "Sow seed,—but let no tyrant reap;
> Find wealth,—let no impostor heap,
> Weave robes,—let not the idle wear,
> Forge arms, in your defence to bear,"

is the advice he gave on the same occasion to men already maddened with distress.—

> "I met Murder on the way,
> He had a mask like Castlereagh,
> Next came Fraud, and he had on,
> Like Lord Eldon, an ermine gown,
> Like Sidmouth next, Hypocrisy,
> On a crocodile, came by"

Such is his description of three of the most prominent British ministers, in his "Masque of Anarchy"

A man who could write in this way of the principal personages in the ministry was not likely to be fastidious in selecting subjects for his ordinary poetry It is not, perhaps, fair to judge a writer by a poem which, like "Queen Mab," was published when the author was only twenty-one. But nearly all Shelley's longer poems are marked by the same reckless disregard of public opinion. The "Epipsychidion," for instance, is a passionate declaration of love from a married man to a beautiful girl.—

> "Are we not formed, as notes of music are,
> For one another, though dissimilar?"

The "Revolt of Islam" in its original shape was so unnaturally offensive that the publisher protested against it, and procured its modification. Even in its amended form it probably presents a better key to the poet's wild opinions than any

other of his works. It is a protest against the ordinary usages of society, which Shelley calls "custom." Cythna and Laon declare war against this custom. The reader finds some difficulty in following the fertile imagination of the poet through the phases of alternate suffering and victory which the hero and the heroine experience. He fails to comprehend the means which enabled Cythna to enthrone herself as the Goddess of Liberty, or to appreciate the causes which produced the sudden downfall of her authority Her flight with Laon on a black Tartarian steed is absurdly unnatural; and her subsequent conduct, or the narrative of it, is grossly indecent Custom, in short, or, to speak more correctly, the custom which had made matrimony a necessity, was the tyranny against which Shelley's eloquence is directed, and the poem is thus fitly dedicated, in some of the most beautiful verses Shelley ever wrote, to the lady who, for his sake, had broken the bands of custom

> "So now my summer's task is ended, Mary,
> And I return to thee, mine heart's true home."

And again—

> "How beautiful, and calm, and free thou wert,
> In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
> Of custom thou didst burst and rend in twain!"

It has already been shown that the same hatred of custom inspired the "Epipsychidion" A similar opinion lurks in the exquisite verses on the sensitive plant, and in the even more beautiful recollection—

> "We wandered to the pine forest
> That skirts the ocean's foam,
> The lightest wind was in its nest,
> The tempest in its home.
> The whispering waves were half asleep,
> The clouds were gone to play,
> And on the bosom of the deep
> The smile of heaven lay"

The slight review, which has been thus attempted, of the poets,[1] who were alive at the conclusion of the great war,

[1] The only other poets who gained a very great reputation at the same period were Rogers and Keats. Whatever judgment may be formed on their poetry,

illustrates the remarkable nature of the movement which was perceptible at the same period in every branch of British literature. Briefly stated, the main features of that movement were as follows:—The eighteenth century had been memorable for the spirit of inquiry, speculation, and research, whose foundations had been laid by Newton, and whose superstructure had been reared by Hume, Adam Smith, and Bentham. The outbreak of the Revolution in France, and the war which had ensued from it, had been unfavourable to calm and dispassionate inquiry. None but the calmest minds had preserved their equilibrium, and the majority of writers had been hurried by their political feelings into a violent attack on the principles on which society was founded, or into as violent and uncompromising a defence of the old system of government. During the remainder of the eighteenth century all the leading writers were, as a rule, frightened into Conservative principles. As the nineteenth century rolled on, the younger writers, growing up to manhood, reverted to the doctrines which Revolutionary excess had made temporarily unfashionable. About the same time the calmer minds of the generation resumed the inquiries which had been interrupted by the Revolution, and renewed the examination of the great problems in commerce and jurisprudence upon which their predecessors had been engaged. These circumstances had, of course, a corresponding effect on the generation which was growing up to manhood. The opinions of its members were formed while Ricardo was explaining the doctrine of rent, while Hallam was critically examining the British Constitution, while Byron and Shelley were declaiming against custom They grew up full of ideas which would have shocked their fathers: unprepared, indeed, to accept the training which Shelley had inherited from his father-in law, but equally reluctant to defend the old positions which Tory statesmen had previously main-

they exercised little influence on the politics of the succeeding generation, and do not, therefore, require further notice in this chapter. It would be otherwise easy to show that the tendency of Rogers was Conservative; and that Keats, whose mind was free from political passion, simply desired to revert to the old classic poetry of the ancient world.

tained. In consequence, every year that passed gradually modified the opinions of the Tories as a party. Every old Tory who dropped out of the ranks reduced the strength of the dwindling phalanx which rallied round Lord Eldon and Lord Sidmouth. Every young politician who entered Parliament for the first time increased the power of the growing body of Conservatives, who wished to maintain the citadel of Toryism but to abandon the indefensible outworks which their forefathers had defended. The old Tory policy was silently abandoned; a new Tory policy was as silently formed, and old-fashioned country gentlemen discovered, to their sorrow, that a Tory government was gradually surrendering all the old positions which the Tory party had, in previous years, resolutely maintained [1]

There are two other circumstances, connected with the literature of the period, which deserve the attention of the student of the nineteenth century. One of them, indeed, made only a slow and gradual impression on British politics. The effect of the other was as great as it was immediate. The first of these circumstances is the commencement of literary work by women; the second of them is the rapid development of periodical literature.

Literary women

It is a remarkable fact, which perhaps has hitherto hardly attracted sufficient attention, that few women had ever made any great mark in the world by their abilities before the eighteenth century. The women who had gained most distinction had been famous from their birth, their beauty, their misfortunes, their vices, the distinction of their children, or from qualities which are rather admirable in men than in women We hardly read of any famous for mere womanly qualities or for literary ability. Sappho was the only great

[1] It was Peel's constant argument in 1828 that the claims of the Roman Catholics could not be resisted, because all the young members of the party were opposed to maintaining them. (See his Memoir, vol. i.) Palmerston, who was a member of the Tory government, but the best representative of the new school of Toryism, talks of the "stupid old Tory party," anticipating the very epithet which afterwards gave so much offence to the Conservatives when it was applied to them by a Radical.—Bulwer's *Palmerston*, vol i. p 171.

poetess whose name has been handed down to us from the ancient world, and the lines of Sappho which still exist may almost be counted on the fingers. Jael is perhaps more highly commended than any other woman in the Old Testament; and Jael is commended for committing a treacherous and cold-blooded murder

The introduction of Christianity improved the position which woman had previously occupied in the world. The most graceful figures in the Gospel story were the women, who never lost their love for, or their faith in, their Master. His maxims raised women to a higher station. Marriage, in the light of Christianity, became a contract entered into between two equal parties, sanctioned by religious rites, indissoluble except by the highest authority and for the most solemn reasons. But man, in the middle ages of the world, hardly suited his actions to the ideal of his church. The wife was not absolutely carried off or sold; but her consent to the union was not so necessary as her father's The husband kept a stick in readiness for the personal correction of his spouse; and society did not see anything either unseemly or unmanly in a man administering a good beating to his wife

Effects of Christianity on the female sex

A life of this description was not calculated to produce women of high womanly qualities. Women became famous who, like Boadicea, in Britain, or Joan of Arc, in France, beat the men at their own weapons. Margaret of Anjou, rallying the squadrons which her weak-spirited lord had not the courage to lead, Elizabeth standing at bay against the power of the Spanish monarchy, Isabella of Spain conquering kingdoms, and subduing every feminine feeling in brutal persecution of Jew, Turk, infidel, and heretic; Catherine de Medici counselling and witnessing one of the most infamous of modern massacres—these are the women whose names fill the largest spaces in the history of the ages in which they lived. A period, indeed, arrived when women were known for other qualities. The severity of the Reformation was succeeded by unrestricted license; the courts

Women in the Middle Ages.

of the two most civilised of European nations abandoned themselves to vice; and women obtained influence, not because they could ride, fight, or work like men, but from their beauty, their wit, or their profligacy. France and England were cursed with the rule of Bourbon and Stuart; and society in both countries was tainted with the corruption and license which disgraced their courts. License prevailed in France till it was swept away by a Revolutionary deluge of blood. England, more fortunate than her neighbour, was purified by the accession of George III. to the throne. Great ladies who had lost their character were received coldly at court, young ladies with a character to lose reflected on the social ostracism which was the new result of losing it, and the upper classes observed that the first lady in the land, who gave the tone to society, was a little woman without much beauty and with less wit, whose only claim to eminence beyond her exalted rank was her affection for and her fidelity to her husband.

Influence of Queen Charlotte

It is difficult to exaggerate the social consequences which resulted from the purity of the court of George III. Neither the profligacy of his sons, nor the growing wealth of the world, and the luxuries which wealth ensured, have destroyed or obscured them. Confirmed by the character of his granddaughter, they have perhaps, in some instances, led to faults in an opposite extreme. A single error on the part of a woman is now punished with a severity which neither time nor repentance is allowed to soften, and a woman who has once made a false step is, ever afterwards, excluded from society. Punishment, however, ceases to reform when it is known to be perpetual; and those who have nothing to hope from their good conduct imagine that they have nothing to lose by their bad behaviour. But the social consequences of a purified court are obvious to any one, its consequences on woman's work are perhaps less apparent. Just as it is true that there were brave men before the days of Agamemnon, so it is true that there were wise women before Mary Somerville. The deeds of the brave were lost to us from the want of an historian, the wisdom of

the wise was rendered useless from want of an opportunity. In an age when woman's chief claim to distinction lay either in her courage or her beauty it never occurred to woman to try her chances in other fields. Brought up from childhood to believe in the inferiority of her sex, she had neither the education which would have enabled her, nor the ambition which would have stimulated her, to establish her equality with man.

The purer atmosphere which prevailed in the moral world during the close of the eighteenth century raised woman to a higher level. When woman once found that she was man's equal there was nothing to prevent her from competing with him in the subjects to which his abilities were devoted. There are, indeed, some portions of man's work in which it may be hoped that the mass of women may never engage. We do not wish our wives and daughters to fight our battles for us A large portion of the female sex revolt from the notion of publicly disputing with men in the Senate, in the courts, or on the platform. But there can be no doubt that there is a great deal of work, which till lately has been solely performed by men, which might be discharged with equal success by women. There is, for instance, no reason why women should not excel in the highest walks of literature and art [1]

Capacity of women for novel-writing

There is, perhaps, no branch of literature for which women are unsuited The example of Mrs Somerville decisively proves that some women are capable of sustained intellectual exertion which could be endured by few men, and an author who is capable of sustained intellectual effort need shrink from no work. But, so far as experience goes, fiction is apparently the region in which female authoresses are especially at home. Nor is this surprising Excellence in fiction usually turns on the capacity to appreciate and delineate character, and women have at least as much opportunity for studying character as men. Vast numbers of novels at the present day are written by women, and the

[1] Mackintosh, in 1810, made the striking remark, that "there seem to be as many paintresses at Paris as there are female novel-writers in London. What," he adds, "is the reason of the difference?"—*Mackintosh*, vol. ii p. 40.

greatest living writer of fiction is a woman. The influence which novel-writing is giving to the female sex is enormous. "Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun once said 'he knew a wise friend who believed that if a man were permitted to make all the ballads of a nation he need not care who should make the laws.'" It might be said of the present age that the power of controlling thought is passing from the ballad-maker to the novel-writer. Political speeches are studied by some; sermons are avoided by many, history has only a few students, but every one reads novels. The novel influences for good or for evil the thoughts of its readers: the thoughts of its readers may ultimately determine the government of the world.

There can be little doubt that the first consequence of women writing novels was an improvement in morals. Few women could venture to imitate the language which Fielding put into the mouth of Squire Western, to depict the treachery with which Lovelace accomplished the ruin of Clarissa; or to relate Corporal Trim's experiences when he lay wounded in the knee. They were compelled to rely on purer scenes for their story, and society, purified by their example, refused in future openly to patronise grossly immoral publications Women, like Scott's friend Mrs. Keith, were ashamed to read in their own chamber to themselves novels which they had not blushed in their younger days to hear read aloud in society.[1] Men excused themselves for reading "Don Juan" because it was in rhyme, and they kept the pages of "The Monk" from the eyes of their daughters. A purer literature was, in this way, substituted for the improper stories which had been previously fashionable; and people learned almost for the first time that a story could be interesting which was neither improper nor immoral.

Three ladies are more particularly associated with this great literary reform · Frances Burney, Jane Austen, and Maria Edgeworth. Miss Burney's life has been admirably told by Macaulay. She was the daughter of Dr. Burney, the musician, the friend of Johnson and a host of other great men. Her father's parties were attended by characters in every class of

[1] Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 466.

society; and little Frances Burney, shrinking from the motley throng of wealth and talent, unobserved herself, observed all that passed at them. Miss Austen, on the contrary, who was born about the time at which Miss Burney commenced to write, passed her short life in a country parsonage and in the quietest society The greater part of Maria Edgeworth's time was spent on the property of her father, an Irish landlord, at Edgeworthstown, in Ireland.

Miss Edgeworth was the most fertile of these three writers She has done for the Irish race what Scott has done for Scottish scenery She has sketched, with inimitable skill, the pathetic and the humorous aspects of Irish character Her stories gave Scott the idea, which he ultimately developed in the Waverley Novels "He would never, in all likelihood," said his biographer, "have thought of a Scotch novel if he had not read Miss Edgeworth's sketches of Irish character."[1] But there is this distinction between Miss Edgeworth and Scott. Scott sketched the Scotland of his fathers, or, at the latest, of his own boyhood Miss Edgeworth described the Irish as she herself saw them Scott's novels are essentially histories of a former age; Miss Edgeworth's are annals of her own time No one would dream of turning to Scott for an account of Scotland or of Scotch society during the author's own life But no one would venture on describing Irish life, at the commencement of the present century, without consulting Miss Edgeworth. The accuracy of Miss Edgeworth's descriptions give her writings an especial value. Any one who will take the trouble of comparing her account of the Colambre estate, in "The Absentee," with Scott's own account of her father's estate at Edgeworthstown, will see that the writer who was describing what he had seen, and the author who was professedly drawing on her imagination, were both engaged on the same model.

Maria Edgeworth

Miss Edgeworth's Irish tales gave a world of readers an interest in the impulsive people among whom the greatest portion of her life was spent. When she turned from Irish

[1] Lockhart's *Scott*, p 302.

scenes to delineate fashionable people in London she did not attain the same degree of excellence. She sketched the Irish faithfully, because she had lived with them all her life and thoroughly understood all their virtues and all their weaknesses. She failed to draw her peers and peeresses with equal accuracy, because she had only a superficial acquaintance with London society. In Ireland she painted portraits, in London caricatures.

Frances Burney and Jane Austen.

Macaulay has detected the same difference between the creations of Miss Burney and those of Miss Austen as that which may be traced between Miss Edgeworth's Irish characters and her peers and peeresses. Miss Burney saw a great many clever people in her father's house in London. She watched them closely, she studied their eccentricities, and she caricatured them in "Evelina." Miss Austen saw no one but the quietest people in her father's parsonage. The great majority of them had probably nothing eccentric about them they would have been impossible subjects for caricature Most of the figures in the narrow circle of her acquaintance bore a close resemblance to one another; and Miss Austen, if she described them at all, had to dwell on the nicer differences of their characters. In Miss Burney's first novel, "Evelina," the canvas is crowded with a variety of persons, and the heroine is placed in a series of sensational situations. At one moment she is pestered by a fop, at another she is exposed to the importunate insolence of a scoundrel, at a third she is embarrassed by the presence of some vulgar relatives of her own. At one time she mixes in the highest society, at another, she is mistaken for an actress at the Marylebone Gardens She emerges successfully from the most startling adventures; and, after a series of dramatic incidents, marries, on the last page of the novel, the nobleman with whom she fell in love almost on the first. In Miss Austen's first novel, on the contrary, there is no sensation A mother, living with three daughters in a quiet Devonshire village, becomes gradually acquainted with a few of her neighbours and their connections. One of her daughters, blessed

with the most placid disposition, forms an attachment for a man who, without her knowledge, has contracted a foolish engagement which he feels himself bound in honour to keep Another of her daughters, passionate and enthusiastic in her tastes, falls in love with a gentleman, who basely abandons her for the sake of another lady's fortune. The passion and enthusiasm of the one sister soften in the course of the tale into something like the placidity of the other. The placidity of the other ripens gradually into something like warmth Yet the two characters are as distinct at the end of the story as they are at the beginning of it. Though Sense acquires some degree of Sensibility, and Sensibility gains a great deal of Sense, the title of the novel is as appropriate at the close as at the commencement of the work. Miss Burney, like most novel-writers, during the progress of her work exaggerates the distinctive features of her characters, Miss Austen occupies her whole time in obliterating them, and yet succeeds in leaving them at the end of her story distinct and clear.

The extraordinary skill which Miss Austen displayed in describing what Scott called "the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life,"[1] places her as a novelist above her predecessor, Miss Burney. Some high authorities have doubted whether she is entitled to rank above her contemporary Miss Edgeworth. In Macaulay's opinion Madame de Stael was certainly the first woman of her age, Miss Edgeworth the second; and Miss Austen the third.[2] Yet Miss Austen has one advantage over Miss Edgeworth which is very important. In reading Miss Austen no one ever thinks of the moral of the story, yet every one becomes insensibly the better person for perusing it In reading Miss Edgeworth one is apt to forget the story and to think only of the moral; and the moral loses half its force from the persistent manner in which it is obtruded on the reader. The main object of the one writer seems to be to create interest in her tale; the chief desire of the other to inculcate a moral precept. There can be no doubt, too, that

[1] Lockhart's *Scott*, p 614.
[2] Trevelyan's *Macaulay*, vol. i. p. 240.

Miss Edgeworth weakens the force of her moral by the pains which she takes to make her whole story point to it. The reader feels that he is introduced, not to a novel, but to a sermon, and so is insensibly led to criticise the author's reasoning, instead of blindly accepting her teaching.

The ultimate consequences of women's work.

The three women who have thus been mentioned are the most prominent examples of the change which was gradually taking place in the position of their sex. They succeeded in establishing a considerable literary reputation, and in demonstrating that women could compete successfully with men in some branches of literature It is worth observing, however, that all of them were free from the influences which affected their male contemporaries. Miss Burney's best works were, indeed, written before the French Revolution But Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen were writing at the time at which Southey and Wordsworth were undergoing the remarkable changes of opinion which have been already recorded Yet neither of them were perceptibly influenced by the politics of the stirring times in which they lived Women were, in fact, so completely removed from the strife of party warfare that the stormiest revolution made little or no impression upon them. Such a result could not have occurred fifty years afterwards As soon as women had proved their capacity to compete with men in one field, they displayed an increasing readiness to contend with them in other quarters The authoresses who at the commencement of the century were proving the capacity of their sex, were, however, unable to see the full consequences of their own work, or to realise the circumstance that their labours would lead to an agitation for women's rights on the platform and in the polling booth which would be unconcluded half a century after they themselves had ceased to exist.

The periodical press

The influence, then, of the women who obtained a literary reputation in the earlier years of the century was essentially prospective; but there was another characteristic about the literature of the period, which could be detected by the most superficial observer, productive of im-

mediate results. Periodical literature had existed for more than a century in England. But it first obtained the commanding position which it has since occupied about the period at which this history opens. The periodicals, which had previously been regarded with suspicion and dislike, were becoming beyond all dispute a power in the State. Newspapers, in the modern sense of the term, are of very recent origin. A written newspaper would be deemed impossible by the present generation, but the art of printing was known for centuries before it was applied to the purpose of dispensing news. The newsletter of the earlier years of the seventeenth century was literally a manuscript letter, and the *Weekly News*—the first paper which appeared in this country in print—was only published in 1622.[1] One hundred and thirty years after the publication of the *Weekly News*, or in 1753, the number of stamps issued to the newspapers only amounted to 7,411,757. In 1801 the issue of stamps had risen to 16,000,000, and in 1821 to 25,000,000. A single newspaper, at the present time, issues more copies in ten days, than all the newspapers, published in 1821, issued in a year.

The stamp duty, which forms an accurate test of the circulation of newspapers, was first imposed in 1712. It was at that time a tax of 1*d.* on each newspaper printed on a whole sheet, and of ½*d.* on each paper printed on only half a sheet. The newspapers foresaw their inevitable ruin from the imposition of this tax. "This is the day," wrote Addison, "on which many eminent authors will probably publish their last works. I am afraid that few of our weekly historians, who are men that, above all others, delight in war, will be able to subsist under the weight of a stamp duty in approaching peace." As a matter of fact many newspapers at once expired, and, perhaps from this circumstance, the tax was itself abandoned. It was, however, renewed later on in the century. At the accession of George III. it was fixed at 1*d.* a sheet, in 1757 it was raised to 1½*d.*, in 1776 to 2*d.*; in

The stamp duty

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1794, p. 375.

1789 to 2½*d.*; and in 1815 to 4*d.*[1] The price of every newspaper was raised to 7*d.* But neither the tax nor the increase of price stopped the circulation of the papers. Edition after edition of the more popular journals of the day was issued as rapidly as the sheets could be struck off; and the circulation was only limited by the mechanical impossibility of complying with the demand The events of the war everywhere excited a feverish anxiety for news, and men of all classes bought the papers, in the hope of obtaining some fresh tidings from the Continent

At the close of the great war there were six daily papers, published in London, which exercised a considerable influence on political affairs These six papers were the *Times*, the *Courier*, the *Chronicle*, the *Advertiser*, the *Herald*, and the *Post*, and of these six the *Times* was far the most important The *Times* in 1816 enjoyed a circulation of more than 8000 copies It paid a stamp duty to the Government of about £900 a week, or of £45,000 a year. But even this duty was only one portion of the burden on its proprietors. The paper on which it was printed was taxed; the advertisements which were inserted in it were taxed; and 10 per cent. of its profits were paid as income-tax It was under such conditions that the greatest journal that the world has ever seen was produced during the earlier years of its eventful career. The *Times* was commenced by John Walter in 1785, as the *Daily Universal Register*, it adopted its present name in 1788. In 1803 Walter was succeeded by his son, John Walter the second. Dr Stoddart, in the first instance, and subsequently Thomas Barnes, were engaged as editors of the paper under his management. Barnes assumed the editorship of the *Times* in 1816, and succeeded by his ability and discretion in increasing the great reputation which the paper had already acquired But a much greater impulse than Barnes' abilities could give had a few months before been imparted to it. In November 1814 the

Newspapers in 1815

The *Times*

[1] Return Public Inc. and Exp Sess. 1869, p 429 Grant gives the figures differently. *Hist. of the Newspaper Press*, vol. i. p 6

Times was, for the first time, printed by steam. The machinery was far less perfect than that which is at present in use, but it constituted an extraordinary advance in the history of newspapers. Before steam was used it was impossible to do more than strike off 450 copies of any paper in an hour. The circulation of a newspaper depended, not on the demand for it, but on the capability of the hand-press to meet the demand. The imperfect machine, introduced in 1814, enabled 1100 sheets to be impressed in an hour The paper was printed nearly three times as rapidly as before, and the public could be provided with five copies with the ease with which they had previously been supplied with two The introduction of machine-printing at once confirmed the *Times* in the precedence which it had already attained With one short interval, in 1828, it enjoyed for forty years a larger circulation than any other newspaper

The circulation of the *Courier* in 1816 was only inferior to that of the *Times* It sold about 5000 copies a day.[1] It was an evening newspaper, and was in the habit of issuing edition after edition. It was first established in 1792, was distinguished for its ultra-Liberal principles, and was on two occasions the subject of political prosecutions In 1799 the *Courier* was purchased by Daniel Stuart, the proprietor of the *Post*. Stuart was a Tory; and the *Courier*, of course, adopted Tory principles. The *Post* had been started ten years before the *Courier*, or in 1782, and had been purchased by Stuart for a very small sum in 1785. Stuart had a remarkable faculty for discovering literary talent and for obtaining the assistance of literary men on moderate terms. He engaged Coleridge, Lamb, and Mackintosh to write for the *Morning Post*, and he occasionally availed himself of their services on the *Courier*. Stuart, after converting the *Post* into a valuable property, sold it in 1803; he retired from the *Courier* in 1816 The *Post* has retained, to the

The *Courier* and the *Post*

[1] So I gather from the returns in the *Ann Reg* of 1822 Grant, in his *Hist of the Newspaper Press*, vol. i p. 355, places the circulation at 12,000 copies, but this is plainly an exaggeration

present day, the popularity which it acquired at the commencement of the century. The *Courier* never recovered from the decreased demand for news after the conclusion of peace.

In 1816 the *Morning Chronicle* had a much smaller circulation than the *Times*, but it enjoyed, in some respects, a higher reputation than any other newspaper Commenced in 1769, it was the oldest of all the leading papers. Its editor, James Perry, was uniformly treated with a deference which was paid to no other editor. He was the first editor of a newspaper who had the spirit to send shorthand writers into the gallery of the House of Commons He succeeded in obtaining even higher literary talent on his staff than Stuart collected for the *Post* and the *Courier*. John Campbell, who subsequently became Lord Chancellor, Thomas Campbell, the poet, Coleridge, Mackintosh, Hazlitt, and M'Culloch all placed their pens at different periods at the disposal of Perry. The *Chronicle* profited from the ability which it thus employed, and, at the commencement of the century, enjoyed a reputation which was hardly inferior to that of the *Times*

The *Morning Chronicle*

Some of the highest literary ability in the land was thus employed in contributing to the press, yet writers in the press were regarded at the close of the eighteenth and at the commencement of the nineteenth century as of an inferior class. It was supposed to be ungentlemanlike for any one to write for hire. Reporters in 1798 were described by Abbot as "blackguard newswriters." Ten years later, or in 1808, the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn made a bye-law excluding all persons who had written in the daily papers from being called to the Bar. More than twenty years afterwards a Lord Chancellor offended the propriety of his supporters and excited their animadversions by asking the editor of the *Times* to dinner. The press was regarded as a pestilent nuisance, which it was essential to destroy. Southey had himself once been a journalist, yet, in 1817, he deliberately declared to Lord Liverpool, "You must curb the press, or it will destroy the constitution of the country. No means," he added, "can be effectual for checking the intolerable license of the press

Position of writers for the press

but that of making transportation the punishment of its abuse." [1]

Southey's opinion proves the importance which newspapers had already acquired. Yet the newspaper of 1817 consisted of only a single sheet of four pages, and did not contain much more matter than four pages of the *Globe* do now. It was impossible for a paper with this limited space at its disposal to attempt any profound political or literary criticism. Before the commencement of the present century, moreover, "the literary periodicals of Great Britain were repositories of miscellanies relating to art, poetry, letters, and gossip, partly original and partly selected, huddled together without system." [2] At the commencement of the present century, however, a knot of very remarkable men decided on founding a new periodical of a different character. Connected as they mostly were with Edinburgh, they determined to call their venture the *Edinburgh Review*. The success which they immediately achieved is one of the most remarkable circumstances in literary history.

The *Edinburgh Review*

A society had been in existence in Edinburgh for many years, in connection with its university, of which many men, destined to achieve fame, were at one time or another members. It was the object of this society to train its members in the arts of elocution and debate. One of them, from time to time, read a paper at its meetings, and the paper became the subject of a general discussion The Speculative Society, as it was called, numbered among its members some of the most remarkable men who were ever collected in one association. Dugald Stewart, Playfair, Mackintosh, Scott, Jeffrey, and Russell all belonged to it.

[1] See the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art Newspapers, *Ann. Reg*, 1822, p. 350, where returns of the stamps for 1801 and 1821 are given, Grant's *History of the Newspaper Press*, vol. i pp 101, 172, 221, 386, *Diary of Lord Colchester*, vol. i. p 162, and vol ii. p 240, in the latter of which the story of the Benchers' bye-law is related, which Grant (vol. ii p 184) declared his inability to trace the date of, Greville, vol. iii. p. 169, for the invitation of Barnes to the Lord Chancellor's dinner, Yonge's *Life of Lord Liverpool*, vol. ii pp. 298, 299, for Southey's opinions of the press.

[2] Stanton's *Reforms and Reformers*, quoted in Allibone's *Dict. of English and American Authors*.

Jeffrey was born in 1773, was educated at the High School of Edinburgh, and at Oxford, and was called to the Scotch Bar in 1794. Marrying in 1801, he brought his bride home to some modest lodgings, furnished at the cost of a few pounds, but which will always be recollected by the literary student. In these modest lodgings, where Jeffrey was in the habit of entertaining a select circle of his intimate friends, the idea of the *Edinburgh Review* was originally conceived. The founders of the new *Review* mainly relied on Jeffrey, Brougham, Horner, and Sydney Smith, who was the nominal editor of the first number. Sydney Smith was one of the most formidable pamphleteers which this country has ever produced. With extraordinary powers of wit, sarcasm, and expression, his writings had an immense effect on the politics of his time Born in 1771, and producing his most pungent work—"The Letters of Peter Plymley"—in 1807 and 1808, he was at the zenith of his reputation at the close of the great war. Smith's writings were always logical, but he rarely relied on his arguments alone for the success of his cause. He did not convert his readers to his own side He overwhelmed his opponents with ridicule The process of damning the plaintiff's attorney has been often resorted to; but it has usually been adopted by advocates with a weak cause to rely upon. Sydney Smith thrust home his attack on the person of his adversary, when his adversary might have been beaten with more logical weapons His exuberant wit was displayed in his most argumentative writings, and dazzled with its brilliancy those who were not convinced by his arguments

Sydney Smith

Jeffrey had neither the exuberance of wit nor the lightness of expression which characterised Sydney Smith. But he was a greater critic and a better editor. His criticisms are strict; they are occasionally unfair, but are always able; and, though many of his conclusions have been reversed by the judgment of posterity, his opinions are still uniformly quoted with deference, and usually accepted as authoritative Before the age of Jeffrey the art of the critic was almost unknown. "Criticisms on books were jejune in the extreme, consisting chiefly of a few smart

witticisms and meagre connecting remarks, stringing together ample quotations from the work under review. The *Edinburgh Review* appeared: "its first number revived the discussion of great political principles." The public perused it with avidity; it excited "a new sensation in all classes of readers;" and the art of criticism at once attained the position in the literary world which it has ever since occupied "[1]

The position which the *Edinburgh Review* succeeded in at once attaining could not have been won by Jeffrey alone with the solitary assistance of Sydney Smith. But Jeffrey had the good fortune to number among his friends and associates two other men, whose services proved essentially useful to him, Horner and Brougham. Born in 1778, the son of a tradesman, with no advantages other than his own ability to aid him, enjoying no office, leaning on no patron, Francis Horner, in his short life, won for himself the esteem of all classes of society An admiring Senate suspended its sittings on the tidings of his death in a foreign land, and voted to his memory with general approval a statue in Westminster Abbey. Horner was an advanced Liberal, but he was chiefly remarkable for the strenuous opposition which he raised to the forced circulation of a paper currency His exertions as a member of the Bullion Committee are said to have injured his health and to have hastened his death His enthusiasm in the same cause inspired his first contribution to the *Edinburgh Review.* His influence with Jeffrey was the more remarkable because he was destitute of the qualifications which Jeffrey usually regarded as essential in his contributors. "Wit and fun were the first desiderata," and Horner, who was above all things an economist, had no humour "He puts me in mind," said Scott on one occasion, "of Obadiah's bull,"[2] and the keen point of the illustration will come home to every one who recollects Sterne's account of that famous quadruped. Horner

Brougham was born in the same year as Horner; but it may

[1] For the foundation of the *Edinburgh Review*, see Cockburn's *Jeffrey*, vol. i. p. 125 seq., and cf. Brougham, vol. i p 246

[2] Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 156

be doubted whether, if he had died at the same time, his death would have inspired so much regret, or his name have been remembered so faithfully as his friend's. Yet Brougham's ability was greater than Horner's, and perhaps exceeded that of any of his contemporaries. There were few subjects with which he was unacquainted, or which he was unequal to discuss with the best-informed persons. He was at home in science, in law, in politics, in history, and in literature. His indefatigable and rapid pen illustrated the most varied topics in the pages of the *Review*, and on all of them he wrote with a force and authority which were peculiarly his own. Brougham was a far more constant contributor than Horner. It is said that on one occasion he wrote an entire number of the *Review*, and he was unquestionably the most fertile and capable of all Jeffrey's assistants.

Brougham.

Jeffrey, however, did not rely on these men alone. He was ready to accept the services of any capable writer. Scott himself was a constant contributor, writing five articles in two years.[1] With such assistants Jeffrey rapidly made his mark. The new *Review* obtained a wide circulation, and its blue and buff cover was to be found on every gentleman's table. The success of the *Review* would, in any circumstances, have probably provoked a rival; but rivalry was stimulated by the political bias which the new periodical soon displayed. Jeffrey himself was above all things a critic. I was "much struck," wrote one of Scott's friends, "by the extent, correctness, discrimination, and accuracy of Jeffrey's information, equally so with his taste, acuteness, and wit in dissecting every book, author, and story that came in his way. Jeffrey, for the most part, entertained us, when books were under discussion, with the detection of faults, blunders, absurdities, or plagiarisms."[2] Had Jeffrey stood alone, he would probably have made the *Review* an organ in which all opinions and all parties could have been freely criticised. His chief associates, however, were all strong partisans; and, with the single exception of Scott, they were all strong Liberals. Horner, devoted to the currency question, complained that the

[1] Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 105 [2] Ibid., p. 156.

Review was too independent, and not sufficiently Whiggish.[1] Brougham, a Liberal to the backbone, insisted on the publication of political articles. Scott remonstrated against the deepening Whiggery. Jeffrey retorted that he could not resist the wit. Scott, urging the propriety of neutrality in politics, offered himself to supply a political article. Jeffrey declined, on the ground that it was more necessary to be consistent than neutral.[2] Such a refusal could hardly have done otherwise than offend Scott. The offence was deepened in the autumn of 1808 by the publication of a notable article, "Don Cevallos on the Usurpation of Spain." "The *Edinburgh Review*," wrote Scott to Constable, "had become such as to render it impossible for me to continue a contributor to it. Now it is such as I can no longer continue to receive or read it"[3] In accordance with this opinion he stopped his subscription, and made no secret of his hostility. Scott's opposition speedily became known. Canning, a member of the Tory Government, with literary abilities of the very highest order, was naturally anxious to see a Tory periodical which would be to his own friends what the *Edinburgh Review* had proved to his opponents "John Murray, of Fleet Street, a young bookseller of capital and enterprise,"[4] was ready to undertake the publication of a serial which he had the prudence to see would bring credit to his firm. George Ellis, the warm friend of Canning, heartily supported the project, and Robert Dundas, the eldest son of Lord Melville, and a member of the Government, was also made acquainted with it. But Scott himself was the life and soul of the enterprise. The first number of the new *Review* was published in February 1809, and three articles in it were from Scott's pen The great author continued throughout his career to be an active contributor to the new periodical.

The *Quarterly Review*

It was no easy task to select an editor for the new *Review* who would be a fair match for so powerful an adversary as Jeffrey. But Murray seems at once to have suggested, and Scott to have approved, the selection

Gifford

[1] Alison, vol. i. p 334.
[2] Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 156.
[3] Ibid., p 168, note.
[4] Ibid., p 169.

of William Gifford for the post Gifford "was a little man, dumpled up together, and so ill-made as to seem almost deformed, but with a singular expression of talent in his countenance." Constant ill-health had soured his temper; and an acid temper made him an extremely severe critic. "He flagellated with so little pity that people lost their sense of the criminal's guilt in dislike of the savage pleasure which the executioner seemed to take in inflicting the punishment"[1] Gifford was born at Ashburton, in 1757. His father, who had wasted the little means he had ever enjoyed, died when his boy was young. His mother did not survive her husband for many months; and the future editor of the *Quarterly Review* was sent to school, and apprenticed to a shoemaker. The lad hated the drudgery of his work, and he fortunately attracted the attention of a neighbouring medical man, Dr Cookesley, who collected some money for freeing him from his indentures and for continuing his education. The boy rapidly proved himself worthy of his judicious patron's kindness. He published the "Baviad" in 1794, the "Mæviad" in 1795; in conjunction with Bankes he became the editor of the *Anti-Jacobin* in 1800; and he published his translation of Juvenal in 1802. The "Baviad" and the "Mæviad" were styled by Byron the first satires of the age. Gifford's name was coupled with Pope's in the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers;" and Dr. Cookesley, proud of the success which Gifford had achieved, and probably anxious to perpetuate his own share in it, gave the satirist's name to a boy, whom many Eton men still remember with affection--William Gifford Cookesley.

Such was the man who appeared to Scott and Murray the best possible editor of the new *Review*, which was to rival the *Edinburgh*. Such was the man under whose supervision the *Quarterly* at once attained the position which it has ever since enjoyed.

The success which both the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly Review* achieved induced other enterprising publishers to imitate the example which had thus been set them. In 1816

[1] Lockhart's *Scott*, vol. i. p. 654.

Blackwood, a publisher in Edinburgh, commenced the magazine which still bears his name. He was fortunate enough to secure the services of an editor who rose in his way to a distinction almost as great as that of Jeffrey and Gifford. Wilson, the first editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*, was born in 1785; he was educated at Glasgow and Oxford. At the commencement of the century he was little more than a literary amateur, living amidst the most beautiful scenery of the English Lakes, and writing occasional essays and poetry. The business of Wilson's life commenced only in earnest in 1816, but Wilson became then something more than a mere literary man. His essays, written under the name of "Christopher North," won for him a world of readers, but every one who visited Edinburgh, during his life, carried away a kindly remembrance of the tall, powerful man, whose genial wit and engaging manners had added a new pleasure to society in the Scottish capital Without the satirical power of Gifford, without the knowledge of Jeffrey, Wilson had a warmth of imagination which made his essays peculiarly fascinating; and *Blackwood's Magazine* acquired, under his guidance, the popularity which it has never since lost. *Blackwood's Magazine* and Wilson.

In the year in which *Blackwood* first courted the favour of the educated classes of society a different man commenced addressing a much more numerous body of readers. The career of William Cobbett was more eccentric than that of any of his prominent contemporaries. He was the comet of the literary hemisphere, dazzling the world with his brilliancy, perplexing it with his eccentricity, and alarming it with his apparent inflammability Cobbett's grandfather was a day labourer in Surrey. His father, by hard work, improved his position, and, from being a labourer, came to have "labourers under him,"[1] or, in simpler language, became a farmer. In 1783 Cobbett left his father's house, and began life as an attorney's clerk. An attorney's office seemed to the erratic youth a mere hell upon earth; and, welcoming any means which afforded him a chance of Cobbett.

[1] Bulwer's *Political Characters*, vol. ii p. 102.

escaping from the drudgery of the desk, Cobbett enlisted in the 54th Foot, and sailed with his regiment for America. He served for seven years with his regiment. During that time he attained the rank of sergeant-major, he fell in love with the daughter of another non-commissioned officer; and he saved 150 guineas. His conduct was so excellent that, on claiming his discharge, he received the public thanks of the general officer commanding his division His feelings were so warm that he placed the whole of his 150 guineas in the hands of the young girl whose affections he had won, and who was returning before him to England. The girl, whom he had chosen for a wife, was so prudent that she never used the money, but restored it to him on his return home Cobbett, after marrying the sergeant's daughter, returned to America, and settled in Philadelphia There he maintained himself by teaching English—to Talleyrand among others—and by attacking everything that was American in the columns of a periodical which he styled the *Peter Porcupine* Indicted for a libel, and fined 5000 dollars, Cobbett thought that it was time for him to return to England. After his return he started a new *Porcupine*, a Tory serial. The *Porcupine* was soon superseded by the *Weekly Political Register*, in which Cobbett held himself free to maintain a guerilla warfare with men of all parties and all opinions A periodical of this character was sure to get into trouble. One of the Irish puisne judges—Johnson—writing under the signature of "Juverna," published in its columns a scurrilous attack on the Irish Government. Cobbett was prosecuted. Judge Johnson was compelled to acknowledge his connection with the article, and was heavily fined. Cobbett, indignant with a political party which would not allow him to publish libels on the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, threw himself into the arms of the extreme Radicals. An opportunity soon occurred which enabled him to mark his hostility to the Tory Government. Some British soldiers mutinied. A German regiment was employed to assist in quelling the mutiny; the ringleaders were flogged, and the Germans were ordered to administer the punishment. Cobbett

burst into a furious attack on the authorities for permitting German soldiers to flog British troops. The Government was advised to prosecute him for a libel. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to pay a fine of £2000, and to suffer two years' imprisonment. Nothing in Cobbett's life is more interesting than the circumstances of his imprisonment. From within his prison walls he conducted his paper, his farm at Botley, and the education of his children The domestic history of Cobbett's life forms one of the most pleasing features of his eccentric character; and Cobbett's affectionate qualities never shone with a brighter ray than from his cell in Newgate

On his release from prison Cobbett returned to his paper But in 1816 he suddenly changed the whole conditions of its publication Up to 1816 he had charged a shilling and a halfpenny for each number But on the 2nd of November 1816, he devoted the entire sheet to "An Address to the Journeymen and Labourers of England, Scotland, and Ireland," and the sheet was sold for *2d*[1] The effect of this reduction of price was prodigious. The most powerful political writer in England suddenly became the most widely read, and the *Weekly Register* obtained an influence which no periodical had ever previously enjoyed It was in vain that one set of Tories tried to grapple with the bold writer by suggesting his prosecution Cobbett knew how to advocate Parliamentary Reform without infringing the laws of the country. Every other writer subjected himself, sooner or later, to a prosecution for libel Cobbett, in 1816 and 1817, wrote nothing that "the law officers could prosecute with any chance of success"[2] It was in vain, too, that the Tories styled the *Register* "twopenny trash." Their own indignation and alarm afforded the best proof that Cobbett was writing no trash. His genius had suddenly spread the light of political knowledge through the dark nooks of

[1] The address, not being a newspaper, escaped stamp duty.

[2] Cross, in defending Brandreth, laid the whole blame of Brandreth's treason on Cobbett's address. He called the *Register* "the most mischievous publication ever put into the hands of man."—*State Trials*, vol. xxxii. p. 876. For Brandreth's trial see *Post*, p 365.

England, and had taught English legislators and English statesmen to realise the power of periodical literature.

Conclusion

There were, then, in 1816, three distinct things connected with British literature which affected the history of the time or the history of the succeeding half century. In the first place, men were slowly recovering from "the panic dread of change" which the French Revolution had excited. The foremost thinkers of the period were again addressing themselves to the studies which had been interrupted by the events amidst which the eighteenth century had closed The younger writers were passionately advocating the extreme opinions which their predecessors had hurriedly abandoned These authors were at once the spokesmen and the guides of the rising generation Their works were the best proof that the younger men who were growing up to manhood had freed themselves from the apprehensions by which their fathers had been influenced. They encouraged the desire, by which their contemporaries were animated, to revert to the more liberal system of government pursued in the first half of the preceding century. The older men still adhered tenaciously to the views which they had been in the habit of expressing for twenty years. But their younger adherents doubted the propriety of the measures which their leaders were defending Monopolies of every kind—in trade, in politics, in land, in religion—were becoming unfashionable, and corruption and abuse, defeated over and over again in the House of Commons, found, as will immediately be shown, their chief support in the House of Lords.

This great change was, in one sense, the cause, in another sense the consequence, of the remarkable alteration which was taking place in the tone of British literature. The altered tone, which the foremost writers of the day were adopting, constitutes the first of the three things connected with British literature in 1816 which deserves attention. The second is the successful effort made for the first time by women to compete in literary work with men. A few ladies, living in different circumstances, unconnected with each other, suddenly displayed in a remark-

able manner the capacity of their sex, and laid the foundations of the agitation which has since arisen for the concession of what are called women's rights to women. Their labours, ultimately productive of the largest consequences, form the second of the three things connected with British literature in 1816 which requires attention Still more important was the remarkable development which was taking place in the power of the periodical press The foremost men of the day were writing for the papers. the papers had succeeded in vindicating their right to publish and to criticise the debates in Parliament. Reviews, written and edited with consummate ability, were instructing the upper classes as they had never been instructed before. "Twopenny trash," containing as much wit and spirit as the higher-priced periodicals, was circulating among the poor, while rich and poor in their own house or in a tavern were eagerly reading the news contained in the morning or evening journal The papers had been prosecuted; they had been taxed, their contributors had been denounced as blackguards; they had been declared incapable of being called to the Bar; but all these measures had failed. Prosecution had made them popular the anxiety for news which the war had occasioned had increased the demand for newspapers which taxation might have checked, and the writers, who had been denounced as blackguards in the last ten years of the eighteenth century, were treated with deference in the third decade of the nineteenth century. Ability, as usual, had made its way, and won for itself a position from which it was impossible to degrade it

The development of periodical literature was perhaps even more fatal to the old system of government than any of the other changes which were gradually undermining it. So long as political discussion was confined to the few hundred representatives of the governing classes who happened to sit in Parliament, the ruling families were able to direct the thoughts of the country. The elaborate attacks, which were made upon their system by Adam Smith and Bentham, were read by comparatively few persons. But the periodical press reproduced

the views of Smith and Bentham for the benefit of the entire community Men turned from perusing one of Castlereagh's speeches to the criticisms of the *Times* or the *Chronicle* upon the speaker. The opinion of the "blackguard newswriter," who had the great advantage of having the last word, was accepted with at least as much authority as that of the statesman; and the people, no longer dependent for their opinions on the utterances of politicians, gradually adopted the views of the newspapers which they were in the habit of reading Legislators, indeed, still assumed that the representatives of a few rich men and a few decayed villages accurately reflected the opinions of the nation. But the fallacy, which the presumption involved, was becoming daily more apparent through the operations of the press. The right of Parliamentary representation was denied to nine-tenths of the people. The right of meeting was about to be subjected to new restrictions. But the press supplied the nation with other means of making itself heard Its voice resounded through the length and breadth of the land

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHIEF ACTORS IN THE POLITICAL DRAMA IN 1815.

An attempt has been made in the preceding chapters to trace the material and moral progress of the British people during the reign of George III.; to describe the condition of society in England at the conclusion of the great war; and to recall the effect which politics produced on opinion during the continuance of the struggle. Before actually commencing the succeeding narrative, it may be well to introduce the reader briefly to the chief actors in the ensuing drama Foremost among them stood, of course, the king. His public character has been already referred to. His ideas of government made him, during the earlier part of his reign, the most unpopular of sovereigns But, after twenty-four years were over, a remarkable reaction of public opinion occurred in his favour. Rodney's victories had thrown a halo of glory over the conclusion of the American war. The rise of the second Pitt to power had provided the king with a minister at once trusted and capable; and the conduct of the heir-apparent had filled reflecting persons with alarm at the prospect of his succession. At the moment, too, when the glass was beginning to rise, some unforeseen circumstances influenced the political barometer. A wretched woman, whom there is every reason to believe was insane, made a furious but happily unsuccessful attempt on the king's life; and the king behaved with a courage and a kindliness which affected all who saw his conduct or heard of it. A few years afterwards a grave misfortune afflicted the monarch. He lost, happily on that occasion only for a time, his reasoning faculties, and his ministers were compelled to make arrangements for conducting the government without him. From that

moment the popularity of the monarch never waned. He recovered, and found himself the most popular man in England.

The generation, which cheered George III. during the latter half of his reign, was probably as unreasoning in its enthusiasm as the generation which had hissed him in the first half of it. George III. never deserved unmixed applause; and he certainly never ought to have met with unqualified censure. But the enthusiastic admirers of the monarch had, at least, as much to say for themselves as his indiscriminating judges. If the latter could point to arbitrary acts occasionally committed, the former could dwell on the admirable example which the king was setting to the highest and lowest of his subjects. Marrying, in all probability against his own inclinations, in deference to what he rightly concluded was the most fitting arrangement for his subjects; living the most virtuous and domestic of lives; maintaining in public the splendour which was required of him, but preferring in private the simplest fare and the scantiest luxuries; basing every action on religion, faithful to his wife, affectionate to his children, kindly towards his dependents, charitable to the poor, George III. was a pattern to all his subjects "George II.'s bad morals," wrote no lenient critic, "bore their fruit in George III.'s early years · as I believe that a knowledge of that good man's example, his moderation, his frugal simplicity, and God-fearing life tended infinitely to improve the morals of the country and to purify the whole nation."[1]

Such, briefly told, was the character of the monarch who, at the time at which this history opens, was nominally king of England. For all intents and purposes, however, George III. was already dead. Ever since the autumn of 1810 he had been afflicted with infirmities which would have moved the pity of the hardest heart. His mind deranged, his sight gone, his hearing lost, he wandered through the chambers of his stately palace, with less influence than the meanest of his subjects. A slight interval of returning consciousness enabled him to learn and comprehend the stirring events which preceded and occasioned Napoleon's fall in 1814. But the afflicted

[1] Thackeray's *Four Georges*.

monarch was never able to become acquainted with the great events of the following year. The crowning victory, with which his reign will always be associated, was as little to the sovereign as to the unborn babe.

There can be little doubt that, at the commencement of his reign, George III. contemplated elevating a subject to a share of his throne. Lady Sarah Lennox's bright eyes and unusual beauty captivated the susceptible heart of the young king. Political considerations induced him to turn to another alliance, and to offer his hand to one of the poorest of the princesses of Germany. Charlotte Sophia, for fifty-seven years Queen of England, the daughter of the Duke of Mecklenburgh-Strelitz, had so little anticipation of her future greatness that she is said to have once plaintively inquired, "Who will take a poor little thing like me?" Yet the penniless daughter of the Duke of Mecklenburgh-Strelitz was admirably suited for George III. She adored the husband who had raised her to the first throne in Europe; she shared all his feelings and all his weaknesses. Dignified in public, simple in private life, virtuous, religious even to a fault, her conduct and her opinions accurately reflected the conduct and opinions of her lord. No man and woman ever passed happier or more correct lives than George III. and Queen Charlotte. When George III. was unpopular with all his subjects, the queen appreciated him, and never doubted that he would ultimately be known to the world as she herself knew him.

Queen Charlotte

It is probable that the domestic happiness of the queen decreased from the period at which her husband became more popular. The fearful affliction, with which the king was visited in 1788, commended him to the pity of all his subjects; but his illness at the time, and the constant apprehension of its return, must have been most distressing to his wife. Nor could she have derived much happiness from her large family. Her sons were the source of almost endless anxiety to their parents. Shelley wrote of them as

> "Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
> Through public scorn mud from a muddy spring."

It was hardly fair to call the Regent mud; it was grossly unfair to compare the Regent's parents to a muddy spring. But Shelley's words show the contempt which was felt for the sons of George III.

George Augustus Frederick, the eldest of the family, was not a pleasing character. He was a bad son, a bad husband, a bad father, a bad subject, a bad monarch, and a bad friend. Yet he had external graces of person and manner which must have been singularly captivating. It has been recently stated that he gave himself the name of "the first gentleman in Europe." Unfortunately, the language which he habitually used, the habits to which he was constantly addicted, and the scenes which he frequented, made the title appear like a sarcasm Yet there were occasions when he showed that he could thoroughly deserve his self-imposed title. He knew how to captivate genius like that of Scott, or piety like that of Wilberforce. But, in the company of such men, he was in reality only acting a part, and proving himself, in doing so, a consummate actor On ordinary occasions he placed no restraints either on his actions or on his tongue. The first gentleman in Europe thought it an admirable joke to make a duke as drunk as himself; he saw nothing indecorous in the use of language which was hardly fit for his stable. At the age of twenty the prince fell desperately in love with a beautiful widow, Mrs. Fitzherbert. There is no doubt that he was secretly married to her; yet he directed Fox to contradict the report of his marriage in the House of Commons, and he had the assurance to pretend to Mrs. Fitzherbert that he had never authorised Fox to make the contradiction. The prince, who was guilty of this double treachery to his friend and his wife, was not twenty-four years old.[1]

The Prince of Wales.

Dissolute habits and habitual hypocrisy were not, however, the only vices in the prince's character. He was recklessly extravagant, and, in consequence, involved in the most serious

[1] Russell's *Memoir of Fox*, vol. ii. p 289, note. Cf. Croker, *Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 292, and *Edinburgh Review*, No. ccclxix. p. 11.

pecuniary embarrassments. When he came of age the king settled on him £50,000 a year; the revenue of the Duchy of Cornwall, to which he succeeded, amounted to £12,000; and Parliament provided him with £30,000 to start in life, and £30,000 to pay off the debts which he had incurred as a minor. A Prince of Wales, with a clear income of £62,000 a year, in those days ought to have been affluent. Within a year the prince admitted that he owed £160,000. Two years afterwards, when the king settled on him an additional £10,000 a year, his extravagance had raised his debts to £193,000. Four years afterwards he told Lord Malmesbury that his debts amounted to £370,000; while at the time of his marriage, or in 1794, when the prince was barely thirty-two, Parliament actually voted £650,000 to extinguish them.[1] "If he had been a manufacturing town, or a populous rural district, he would not have cost more"[2]

The prince, by his reckless and inexcusable conduct, had placed himself completely at the mercy of his father. His father, who had long desired his eldest son's marriage, knew that Parliament could be persuaded to make his forming some suitable alliance the condition of discharging his debts To the prince himself the idea of marriage was far from palatable. He was, in the sight of God, the husband of Mrs. Fitzherbert, his affections were, for the moment, fixed on Lady Jersey; and a score of other beauties were more or less associated with his name If he could have escaped from his embarrassments by any other method, he would have avoided matrimony. But his debts were so large that he had no alternative but submission. He consented to marry; and the choice of his father fell on his cousin, Princess Caroline of Brunswick.

Princess Caroline, who thus became the wife of the first gentleman of Europe, was the daughter of the reigning Duke of Brunswick and of Augusta, the eldest sister of George III. At the time of her marriage she was in the twenty-seventh year of her age, and had, in the eyes of a partial courtier, a "pretty face, not expressive of softness; The Princess of Wales.

[1] Jesse, vol. iii. pp 17, 18, 149, 211. [2] Thackeray's *Four Georges*, p. 175.

her figure not graceful; fine eyes, good hand, tolerable teeth, but going; fair hair and light eyebrows; good bust; short, with what the French call *les épaules impertinentes.*"[1] The Duke of Clarence had seen the young lady, had admired her, and had given a favourable report of her person to the Prince of Wales. The first gentleman of Europe had, perhaps, higher notions of female beauty than his rough sailor brother; he certainly had higher notions of cleanliness. It was in vain that Lord Malmesbury had risked Her Royal Highness's displeasure by suggesting that she should pay a little more attention to her person. The Princess took his advice good-humouredly, but never followed it. Her neglect disgusted her husband on her first introduction to him. He called for a glass of brandy. The princess herself declared that he was drunk on her wedding-day.[2] Nine months afterwards she presented her husband with their only child. Before that period had elapsed differences, which proved irreconcilable, had separated the Prince of Wales from his wife for ever.

The Prince of Wales, on his separation from the princess, returned to the irregular attachments of his former years, the follies and vices which were apparently inseparable from his nature. The unhappy princess retired to a villa at Charlton. Separated from her husband, removed from the influence of the court, neglected by the aristocracy, she was driven to form acquaintances in the neighbourhood with persons of rank unequal to her own. Her manner, unfortunately, in the opinions of her best friends, was characterised by a careless levity. "Ah, false and faint-hearted troubadour!" she said, for instance, to Sir Walter Scott, who hesitated for a moment in following her into a conservatory, "you will not trust yourself with me for fear of your neck."[3] If she could so far forget the dignity of her position as to joke in such a manner with a casual visitor, no surprise can be felt at the calumnious reports which were whispered about her. A similar remark, made to

[1] Malmesbury, vol. iii. pp. 178, 179.
[2] *Diary, Life, and Times of George IV.*, vol. i. p. 38.
[3] Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 140.

a less virtuous and less scrupulous person, might have involved her in serious embarrassment.

For many years, however, after the separation of the prince from the princess no real impropriety was proved against her. Her husband was sedulously engaged in collecting evidence against her conduct; the Whig ministry of 1806 consented to appoint a secret tribunal to inquire into it; and a formal and one-sided investigation actually took place. But, though her accusers were in some sort her judges, the main accusation against her was not made out The boy whom she had adopted into her household—little Willikin, as he was familiarly called—was proved to be the son of a certain Sophia Austin; "the evidence of all the servants, as to the general conduct of the princess, was very favourable to Her Royal Highness;"[1] and the accusation of improper conduct, in short, broke down. The commissioners, indeed, who conducted the investigation were not able to stop at this point The same levity, which had shocked Sir Walter Scott, seemed to them to require some mark of their disapprobation But the main charge, which had been brought against the princess, was so grave that the reflection of her judges on her conduct looked very much like a complete acquittal. Though the inquiry had been secret, the facts transpired, and the princess was surrounded with a halo which she did not deserve. "She is an enchanting princess," wrote Scott, "who dwells in an enchanting palace."[2] The ignorant multitude might be excused for their enthusiasm, when even Scott's head was turned by the princess's courteous levity.

The fact that the levity of her conduct had made it possible for her husband to insist on its investigation would have warned most women to have adopted a more prudent course in future. The princess, however, never altered either her habits or her manner.[3] Her levity was certainly as marked as it had ever

[1] So wrote Romilly, vol. ii. p. 144, and Romilly was counsel for the prince.

[2] Lockhart, p. 140.

[3] Her conduct was again indirectly investigated in 1813 by the Privy Council. The prince, in 1814, did his utmost to keep the great sovereigns, who visited Europe after the peace, from paying any attention to the princess. He pre-

been. Her chief favourite was a singing master, whom her ladies nicknamed chanticleer. Nicknames were not reserved for favourites. In the slang of the princess's court the princess herself was always Mrs. Thompson; the Regent, Mr. Thompson; Princess Charlotte, Master Thompson. These nicknames show, at any rate, the utter disregard of form and ceremony which the princess displayed. Her levity, however, was for the moment of less consequence. In 1814 she had withdrawn from England, and soon afterwards she took a beautiful villa on the Lake of Como. The tourists who annually visit the Italian lakes turn with interest from the enchanting scenery to the villa where the injured and neglected wife of a worthless British king passed a portion of her existence. Few, perhaps, of the many thousands of Englishmen who annually gaze on the Villa d'Este are competent to express an opinion on the justice of the charges which were preferred, half a century ago, against its illustrious mistress But every one of them has a more or less perfect acquaintance with the irregularities which disgraced the life of George IV.; and, with true British logic, contend that the queen was innocent, not from any sense or knowledge of her innocence, but because they think that the faults of the husband should condone the errors of the wife; because they know that Caroline was notoriously less guilty than George

If the quarrels of the Regent and the princess had simply concerned themselves, their existence would have been sufficiently unfortunate. Unhappily, however, the guilt of the parents reacted on their offspring, and their differences marred the early days of their only daughter.

Princess Charlotte.

"Weep, daughter of a royal line,
A sire's disgrace, a realm's decay.

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vailed on his mother with this view not to receive her at court. Queen Charlotte, in consequence, became very unpopular with the populace, and was hissed. "My lords," she complained, "I be fifty year and more in this country, and well respected, *but now I be shspit upon.*" (Brougham, vol. II. p. 215.) One of the mob—so runs a more amusing story—put his head into the Regent's carriage and said, "Where's your wife? Where's your wife?" The Prince Regent is reported to have turned to the Emperor of Russia, who was with him, and to have said, "Emperor, that is for you."

Ah! happy if each tear of thine
Could wash a father's fault away!
"Weep—for thy tears are virtue's tears,
Auspicious to these suffering isles—
And be each drop in future years
Repaid thee by thy people's smiles."[1]

The Princess Charlotte, the subject of these touching verses, was, at this period, adored by the nation; and the judgment of the nation seems to have been well deserved. Without any very great natural beauty, with white eyebrows and eyelashes, with a complexion disfigured by marks of small-pox, and with a figure already large and tending to the corpulency which she inherited from both her parents, the princess's winning manner and bright expression made her peculiarly attractive. For all intents and purposes she had never known what it is to have a father. Her father's jealousy had allowed her only occasionally to visit her mother. Her grandmother, with all her excellent qualities, was frigid, distant, and incapable of appreciating the disposition of her impulsive grand-daughter; and the few persons who were allowed to be on intimate terms with her were uneasy at her headstrong and wilful nature.[2] In accordance with her father's orders, her life was so secluded that the public in general knew nothing of her merits or of her faults. She was fifteen years of age before she was allowed to go to the Opera. She was sixteen before she was introduced to the quietest society. She had grown from a girl into a woman before she had emerged from the dull privacy of her retired life. Constantly entreating her father to allow her the ordinary suite which befitted her position; praying that a lady of the bedchamber might be substituted for a governess; and that an establishment might be granted to her, the princess was, at last, allowed to "come out in a limited way." A limited concession

[1] It is said that these verses were suggested by the circumstances connected with the princess's first visit to the Opera. She had dined at Carlton House. Her father had taken more wine than was good for him, and had indulged in language which had shocked his daughter. The princess rose to make her first appearance at the Opera, but rose in tears, expressing herself strongly on the distress she had felt in hearing her father's language.—*Memoirs of the Regency*, vol. i. p. 250; cf. Ward, vol. i. p. 432.

[2] Lady Rose Weigall's *Memoir of Princess Charlotte*, pp. 67, 75.

of this character was absolutely indispensable; for the prince was seriously contemplating his daughter's marriage. The husband whom he selected for her was in every sense but one unobjectionable The Prince of Orange had received an English education; he had served in the English army; he was considerate, courteous, "unexceptionable"[1] But, on the other hand, the recent reverses which Napoleon had sustained had restored the prince's father to the throne of Holland. The heir-apparent to a continental dominion could hardly do otherwise than pass a considerable portion of his time in his future kingdom; and the Princess Charlotte, as his wife, would necessarily have to live with her husband. It seems certain that the consciousness of this necessity had, in a great measure, recommended the match to the Prince Regent. The unnatural father was jealous of the popularity which surrounded his own daughter,[2] and desired her removal to another sphere. But the daughter had inherited the obstinacy of both her parents, and saw that her interest lay in her residence in England. The Regent sent his brother and his ministers to explain to her that she was technically only heir-presumptive, and not heir-apparent to the throne; and that there could be no objection to the residence of an heir-presumptive abroad. The expression did not, probably, reconcile the princess to the suggested arrangement. She knew that she was her father's daughter; and that, unless her father had a son, she was his heir. But the contingency of the Regent's ever having a son was very remote He was already an old man in years. His dissipated life had weakened an originally strong constitution; and his wife, some years younger than himself, was alive and well. The princess had a right to consider herself her father's heir, and was firm.

[1] Princess Charlotte's own word. Lady Rose Weigall's *Memoir of Princess Charlotte*, p. 99.

[2] There were good grounds for the jealousy which the Regent felt. "The Regent," wrote Romilly, on November 30, 1812, "went to the House of Lords and opened the session. In his way to the House and back again he was received with a dead and most humiliating silence: no marks of disapprobation, but no applause. The Princess Charlotte, who was present as a spectator of the ceremony, was recognised by the people on her return, and was greeted with loud and repeated huzzas."—Romilly, vol. iii. p. 73.

The Regent lost his temper, and made his cause worse by losing it. The Prince of Orange committed the blunder of siding with his would-be future father-in-law; and the princess retaliated by breaking off the marriage. The Regent was furious. He dismissed his daughter's household; and the princess rushed into the street, hailed a hackney carriage, and drove to her mother's house in Connaught Place. She was with difficulty persuaded by her father's ministers to return to his roof.

The conduct of the princess had made her marriage with the Prince of Orange impossible. If, indeed, she had formed any real affection for his person, the question of residence would not probably have proved an insurmountable difficulty. She would have gladly followed a husband of her choice to another land, and have forgotten the distant interests of her future subjects in the immediate promptings of her own heart. It was fortunate for this country that her mere tolerance of the Prince of Orange enabled her to form a calm and impartial decision on the matter It would have been a serious misfortune if the heir-presumptive to the throne had resided permanently abroad, or if the fortunes of England had been intimately associated with those of a second-rate continental kingdom. A second Hanover would have formed a second cause of weakness, expense, and anxiety to the country. But the rupture of the princess's engagement was, in another sense, unfortunate. The dynasty of the House of Hanover had been seated for a century on the throne of England. But the descendants of George I. seemed likely to die out. Old men, who had remembered the doubts and difficulties of a disputed succession at the commencement of the reign, had seen the happiest promise for the future in George III.'s large family. But, towards the close of his long reign, it seemed possible that George III.'s fourteen children might leave only one legitimate descendant behind them. His eldest son had a single daughter; and, as a married man living apart from his wife, had not the slightest prospect of other children. His second son, the Duke of York, had been married, in 1791, to the Princess Royal of Prussia, but the marriage had not

been blessed with any issue. His third son, the Duke of Clarence, had some natural children, but he was unmarried[1] His fourth son, the Duke of Kent, was also a bachelor. His fifth son, the Duke of Cumberland, had, about the period at which this history commences, married a woman who had already buried one husband and who had been divorced from another, and whose age made it unlikely that she should have many children. His sixth son, the Duke of Sussex, had infringed the Royal Marriage Act by marrying, first at Rome, and afterwards in London, Lady Augusta Murray; and his seventh son, the Duke of Cambridge, was still unmarried. At the close of the great war, moreover, only one of George III.'s six daughters was married; and his single married daughter had no children. The only prospect, therefore, of the crown being eventually worn by a descendant of George III., apparently consisted in the marriage of the Princess Charlotte, or in the possible issue of the Duke of Cumberland. The Duke of Cumberland, however, was the least popular of the seven sons of George III.; and unhappily there was a good deal in the duke's character and life which fully accounted for his unpopularity. Those people who knew the duke best were the most anxious for Princess Charlotte's marriage, because they were the most desirous of preventing the Duke of Cumberland's succession to the throne. They were, of course, unable to foresee the fortunate events which ultimately prevented this contingency, and which provided England with a queen, reared under happier circumstances than those which had surrounded the childhood of Princess Charlotte, and which

[1] He had, however, frequently meditated matrimony. "Before he went to Ramsgate," in 1811, "he wrote to Lady C—— L—— to propose, who wrote him a very proper letter in answer, declining the honour in the most decided terms. . . . Upon finding she had accepted Pole (who, by-the-by, is solely indebted to him for this acceptance) he wrote to Lord Keith to propose for Miss Elphinstone, who in the most decided and peremptory terms rejected him." [Lady C—— L—— ought apparently to be Miss C——L——. Wellesley Pole was married in 1812 to Miss C. Long.] In 1818 he proposed to Miss W——, "a fine, vulgar miss," who accepted him. He was persuaded, however, to abandon the match in a week, and to propose to the future Queen Adelaide.—*Memoirs of the Regency*, vol. i. p. 146; vol. ii. pp 231, 232.

averted the otherwise inevitable succession of the Duke of Cumberland to the throne.

Precedence in a constitutional monarchy is necessarily given to the king and his family; but neither the long pedigree of the House of Hanover nor the rules of Court could gain respect or popularity for the Regent and his brothers. Foremost in rank, they occupied the first place in no one's thoughts. The very courtiers despised the princes, to whom they paid the customary marks of deference. In 1816 there was one name which held the first place in the heart of every Englishman, the greatness of one hero dimmed the reputation of all the others Arthur, Duke of Wellington, was the third son of the first Earl of Mornington by Ann, a daughter of Lord Dungannon. His father, Lord Mornington, was lineally descended from a certain Walter Cowley, who settled in Ireland in the sixteenth century. The heiress of the Cowleys, long afterwards, married Garret Wesley, a gentleman of Meath; but, like the Cowleys, English by descent. The issue of this marriage died out in 1728; and the last survivor, another Garret Wesley, left his estates and his name to his cousin, Richard Cowley. Richard Cowley-Wesley, after sitting in the Irish House of Commons, was raised to the Irish peerage by the title of Lord Mornington. His eldest son was subsequently advanced to a still higher dignity, and made Earl of Mornington. The first Earl of Mornington had five sons;[1] and four out of the five obtained peerages for their distinguished services. The eldest son became Marquis Wellesley; the second, Lord Maryborough, the third, Duke of Wellington; the fifth, Lord Cowley. No family ever received so many honours in so short a time as were bestowed on the sons of the first Earl of Mornington.

The Wellesley family.

Richard, Viscount Wellesley, Lord Mornington's eldest son, was thought, as a boy, the ablest of his family. In an age distinguished for the elegance of its scholarship he was known as one of the most elegant scholars; and Eton and Oxford fondly expected him to throw fresh lustre on

Lord Wellesley.

[1] He had six sons, but one died in infancy.

the places of his education. Nor did Lord Wellesley deceive the promise of his youth. Made Governor-General of India in the thirty-eighth year of his age, he rivalled the achievements of his most brilliant predecessors, and in seven years doubled the revenue and more than doubled the dominion of the old East India Company. But on his return to England Lord Wellesley hardly maintained the reputation which he had won for himself as Governor-General of India. His disposition and his training unfitted him to shine in English politics; and he had no patience for the compromises to which all English politicians must submit. Born to command, he could not bring himself to obey. He could not act patiently as the subordinate of any minister; and those who would have welcomed him as a colleague would not tolerate him as a chief. Three years and a half before this history commences Lord Wellesley had withdrawn himself from the ministry. In 1816 he exercised only a slight influence on the government. His talents might have made him its most distinguished member.

The Duke of Wellington.

In the numerous wars which he had successfully prosecuted in India, Lord Wellesley had found in his brother Arthur his ablest lieutenant. The great general had not given as a boy much promise of his future greatness. The place of his birth was doubtful, the date of it was doubtful. His mother thought "the slender, blue-eyed, hawk-nosed, and rather sheep-faced boy hopelessly deficient in mental ability; and, after a short residence at Eton, despatched him to the military college at Angers, that he might be fitted 'to become food for powder.'"[1] Wellesley obtained his first commission—an ensigncy in the 73rd—in 1787. His promotion was rapid. In less than a year he became a lieutenant in the 76th; in 1791 he obtained his company in the 58th; in 1792 his majority in the 33rd; and, with his brother's assistance, he purchased his lieutenant-colonelcy in the same regiment in September 1793.

The first service, on which Wellesley was engaged, very nearly drove the young officer from his profession. He was sent to join the Duke of York's army in the Netherlands. The

[1] *Encyclo Britan.*

duke had neither the experience nor the ability which would have fitted him to command an army in the field; many of his inferior officers were incompetent; the troops were grumbling and retreating; and the game was up before Wellesley had a share in it. The 33rd was ordered to cover the retreat; and Wellesley acquired credit, both for himself and his men, by the skill with which these orders were carried out. But the mismanagement of the campaign disgusted him with the service, and, on his return home, he applied for civil employment. An officer who had interest to obtain the lieutenant-colonelcy of a regiment six years after the date of his first commission, might have naturally imagined that he might easily have obtained some profitable post Fortunately for himself and his country, Wellesley was refused, and threw himself heartily into his profession. The 33rd was ordered to India; and thither its young commander, who was prostrated with disease when it sailed, followed it He arrived at Calcutta at a critical period in the history of our Indian Empire. Tippoo Sahib had heard reports of the brilliant successes which the French Republicans had achieved; and perhaps naturally had concluded that an alliance with France afforded him the best prospect of escaping from his engagements with the British. The Governor-General desired Lord Harris to anticipate Tippoo by moving on Seringapatam, and Colonel Wellesley was directed to lead one of the columns of attack. It was on this service that he sustained the only serious repulse which he ever experienced. But the repulse did not retard his future promotion. He was selected, after the fall of Seringapatam, for the command of the town. Lord Wellesley's partiality was amply justified by the event. A new Mahratta war broke out; and Wellesley, with a small force of Europeans, defeated a vast horde of Indians at Assaye. Clive had not triumphed against greater odds. Since Plassey, India had seen no such decisive victory.

Wellesley had gone to India in a fortunate hour for his reputation. His return to England in 1805 was equally opportune. England was engaged in the severest struggle which she had ever encountered; and she had no general and no army. The

Tory Government of the Duke of Portland came into power; and Wellesley joined the ministry as Chief Secretary for Ireland. He had, at this time, however, no intention of exchanging his profession for civil employment. In 1807 he left his office to command a division in Lord Cathcart's army, at the bombardment of Copenhagen. In 1808 he again crossed the seas to win a striking victory at Vimiera; to find himself superseded by Burrard and Dalrymple, and compelled to become a party to the humiliating Convention of Cintra. In 1809 he embarked on the great campaign which has made his name immortal. The cause of the Spanish Peninsula was at that time almost hopeless. The French, in enormous strength, occupied nearly the whole of Spain. Only a small British army was stationed on the shores of Portugal; and Soult was preparing, with an apparently irresistible force, behind the Douro, to subjugate the corner of the Peninsula which was still unsubdued. Wellington, suddenly crossing the Douro in Soult's face, compelled him to abandon his position. Marching boldly towards Madrid, he proved his own capacity and the mettle of his soldiers, by defeating Joseph Buonaparte and 50,000 men at Talavera; and then, leisurely retiring into Portugal, carried out the vast plans which ultimately freed the whole of the Peninsula from the invader, and contributed to the destruction of the French empire.

The problem which Wellington had before him was, with the comparatively small force at his disposal, to drive a much more numerous enemy from a country which it had already conquered He solved it by forming a vast entrenched camp in the immediate neighbourhood of Lisbon, to which his army could always retire, and in which it could be absolutely secure. In such a camp he was in the immediate neighbourhood of the sea; and his army could be supplied with the maximum of certainty and at the minimum of expense.[1]

[1] Wellington realised at Torres Vedras the great truth on which the Spartan, Archidamus, and the Athenian, Pericles, had both insisted at the commencement of the Peloponnesian war, and which received its most important demonstration in the Crimea. "We are superior, it is said"—so spake Archidamus—"in the force of infantry of our confederacy, and we will ravage their country. But they have large possessions far beyond the reach of your infantry, and a

The secrecy and despatch with which the lines of Torres Vedras were formed were as remarkable as the judgment which had suggested their construction Massena, when he fought the useless battle of Busaco, or when he turned, after his defeat, the position which he should never have assailed, imagined that Wellington was being driven into the sea. No historian has ever disclosed the feelings with which the French general first surveyed the heights of Torres Vedras before him. One condition of the contest became, at once, clear to any competent observer: the English, from thenceforward, could not be driven from Portugal. It was still to be seen whether they could drive the French from Spain

It would be impossible in this volume to trace the strategy by which Wellington accomplished this object in the four succeeding years The names of Fuentes D'Onore and Albuera; of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos; of Salamanca and Vittoria; of the Bidassoa, the Pyrenees, and Bayonne, will be associated with the ability of the British general and the prowess of the British army for all time. In 1809 Sir Arthur Wellesley had entered the Peninsula, a young British officer, with an Indian reputation. In 1814 he received the thanks of Parliament as Baron, Viscount, Earl, Marquis, Duke. No other British subject, to quote Lord Eldon's involved language, "had ever risen from one dignity to another until he had attained every dignity, each conferred by distinct grants, made upon different occasions, for different services, and all those services rendered to the country before he could return to it to take his seat [in

fleet that will come and go with the produce, undisturbed by any force that you can oppose to it, while your irresistible infantry will stand amid the devastation itself has made." (Mitford's *Greece*, vol. iii p. 58.) Mitford's is a free but, on the whole, fair rendering of the passage in the original *τοῖσδε ἄλλη γῆ ἐστὶ πολλὴ ἧς ἄρχουσι, καὶ ἐκ θαλάσσης ὧν δέονται ἐπάξονται, κ.τ.λ.* Pericles cheered the drooping spirits of the Athenians in almost the same words: *οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἕξουσιν ἄλλην ἀντιλαβεῖν ἀμαχεί, ἡμῖν δέ ἐστι γῆ πολλὴ καὶ ἐν νήσοις καὶ κατ' ἤπειρον· μέγα γὰρ τὸ τῆς θαλάσσης κράτος.* (Thucyd., Liber. i. c. 81 and 143.) "For they have no other country whence to obtain supplies; while we have our choice among islands and continents. The command of the sea is, indeed, a most important possession." (Mitford, vol. iii. p 73) But Mitford's words give a very imperfect idea of the eloquence and strength of the *μέγα γὰρ τὸ τῆς θαλάσσης κράτος*

the House of Lords] after the grant of the dignities."[1] No general since the reign of Anne had risen so rapidly; because, since the days of Marlborough, no British general had shown such capacity or achieved such distinction.

Had the war finally closed with the stirring events of 1814, and Napoleon's banishment to Elba terminated the struggle, Wellington would have won the lasting gratitude of his fellow-countrymen, but his reputation would hardly have stood so high as it does now He had met and defeated Napoleon's favourite lieutenants, Massena, Soult, Junot, Victor; but he had never yet been matched with Napoleon himself. The British general's sword, however, was not to be finally sheathed until it had encountered the sharp onslaught of the French emperor. Napoleon escaped from Elba. The mere knowledge of his escape drove the Bourbons from the soil of France, and scattered the representatives of the Allied Powers, busily quarrelling over their conquests at Vienna In their distress they all turned to Wellington for aid, and Wellington placed himself at the head of the British and Prussian armies in Belgium. The first shock of the war fell on the country to which he had thus repaired. With marvellous expedition, and with unrivalled skill, Napoleon threw the whole weight of the force which he had hastily collected across his northern frontier. Driving the Prussians from a badly chosen position at Ligny, and compelling the English, in consequence of the defeat of their allies, to withdraw from Quatre Bras, Napoleon, on the 18th of June, stood face to face with Wellington at Waterloo. The English general was, at last, matched on about equal terms with the greatest soldier of modern Europe.

The desperate battle which was the immediate result of the conflict settled the map of Europe for half a century; and gave Europe the longest period of peace which she had ever known. Yet, as a mere example of tactical skill, it deserves only slight attention. Napoleon made the mistake of imagining that he could overawe British soldiers, as he had defeated other armies, by throwing masses of troops upon them. His

[1] Twiss's *Eldon*, vol. ii. p. 252.

expectations were disappointed. The British army stood firm. Suffering fearful losses, exposed to a frightful fire, constantly attacked, never allowed to advance, the troops displayed the excellence of their discipline and the confidence which they reposed in their chief. They had foiled their adversaries' attack before the Prussians' arrival on the field. Blucher and his troops turned a defeat into a rout. Napoleon galloped from the field on which he had lost an empire. The French army, defeated and disorganised, was scattered in every direction. The English and Prussians entered Paris as conquerors; and Wellington, as a crown to all his triumphs, had won the most decisive of his victories over the greatest of modern soldiers.

The success which the Duke of Wellington had achieved had a happy influence on the fortunes of the ministry by whom he was employed. But, at the period at which this history commences, the Duke was still absent from this country He had been appointed to the command of the army of occupation in France, and he was only relieved from the duty in 1817. On his return to England a vacancy was at once made for him in the Government, and he entered the ministry and the cabinet as Master-General of the Ordnance. His colleagues undoubtedly gained from his accession to their councils. They had little to lean upon except their appreciation of his merits and their support of the war. Men still looked back with regret to the days in which Pitt had ruled his cabinet with a firm hand. For, though a ministry was in office, which was destined to govern the country for a longer period than even Pitt, throughout its existence it seemed constantly certain to fall. On its first formation it was supported by a minority, or at the best a slender majority, in the House of Commons. Two years and a half afterwards the retirement of its nominal chief and division among its members threatened its downfall. A little later, the illness of the king, and the known preference of the Regent for the Whigs, made its fall apparently inevitable; when the favour of the Regent had at last been secured, it

The Ministry.

was suddenly deprived of its second head; and the loss of its leader seemed to involve its immediate dissolution. But the Government had not succumbed at the retirement of the Duke of Portland or at the secession of Canning and Castlereagh. It had compelled the Regent to extend to it an ungrudging support; and it had repaired the loss which the death of Perceval had inflicted on it. Associated with the expedition to the Peninsula, every victory which Wellington gained strengthened its position.

The Duke of Portland.

The Duke of Portland, the first of the three heads under whom the Portland, Perceval, and Liverpool administration successively served, had hereditary claims on the friendship of the House of Hanover. He was the great-grandson of the Dutch Count Bentinck, the favourite of William III. Beginning life, like the rest of his family, as a Whig, and chief of the famous Coalition Ministry, whose brief career had been terminated by the triumphant attacks of Pitt on Fox's India Bill—the French Revolution had altered his views of the Whig chieftain. Like Burke, he dissented from the course which Fox pursued, and was rewarded by Pitt with the seals of the Home Office. From that time till the death of Pitt, in 1806, he continued a prominent member of Pitt's and Addington's administrations. His high rank and his long service gave him in 1807 claims for the lead to which none other of the Tory party could at that time aspire. But the Duke's claims solely rested on his high rank and the length of his previous services. He had not naturally the talents which fit men to lead their fellow-men in troublous times; and age and disease had weakened the moderate abilities which he had once possessed. Nominally the head of the ministry, he was virtually powerless in his own cabinet. All the chiefs of departments exercised independent authority, and every one of them did what was right in his own eyes. The ministry managed to hold together while no great events occurred to give rise to differences of opinion among them. But the first expedition to the Peninsula, the convention with which it terminated, and the glorious but disastrous campaign of Sir John

Moore, raised questions which could not be settled without the authority of a strong leader. Two of the most prominent members of the Cabinet quarrelled and retired; the Duke of Portland resigned and died; and the premiership of a weakened administration devolved on Perceval, the leader of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Few ministers have ever succeeded to a more difficult task than Perceval. Deserted by some of his own colleagues, and unable to secure help elsewhere, his own followers doubted his prudence in going on; the king alone stood firm; and, before much more than a year was over, the king was deprived of all power to assist the minister. After he had been in office a little more than a year a grave commercial crisis diminished the resources of the country, and made the task of supporting the war more difficult. But by his patriotic spirit and by dexterity in debate Perceval succeeded in rallying his supporters, and in winning the confidence of the country. He was assassinated in 1812, and his death afforded proof of the strength which his presence had imparted to the ministry, since it immediately led to its defeat in Parliament. At the time at which he died his contemporaries imagined that his exertions and his talents had won for him lasting fame. Thirty years afterwards men only recollected that he had resisted emancipation, that he had resisted reform, and that he had occasionally stooped to defend an indefensible sinecure. Posterity forgot, and history overlooked, the zealous support which he had given to the war, and which forms his chief claim to the gratitude of his fellow-countrymen. So true it is that

Perceval.

> "The evil that men do lives after them:
> The good is oft interrèd with their bones."

On Perceval's death an address was carried in the House of Commons for the formation of a strong administration; and attempts were made both to reconstruct the existing cabinet and to replace it with another. These efforts failed: no course remained practicable but the continuance of the existing ministry in office; and Lord Liverpool was

Lord Liverpool.

promoted to the post of Prime Minister. Robert Banks, second Earl of Liverpool, who thus became the third chief of the Tory ministry, had, with one short interval, held office continually for nineteen years. He remained Prime Minister for nearly fifteen years more. He may be said to have passed the whole of his life in the service of the public. It was his good fortune, as Secretary of State for the Foreign Office, to win the gratitude of his country by concluding the peace of Amiens; it was his good fortune as Secretary of State for the Colonies to supervise the operations of the Peninsular campaign; it was his good fortune as Prime Minister to conclude the most durable peace by which the perseverance of a nation or the ability of a commander had ever been rewarded. But, though his official career was, in proportion to his days, longer than that of any other British minister, and though his name is associated with some of the most important occurrences in the history of the world, he is not usually regarded as a great statesman. Respectable in everything that he undertook, he was eminent in nothing. His smooth and sensible oratory never rose to eloquence; his steady and business-like administration never displayed any genius. During his long career he excited no popular sympathy; but he aroused no aristocratic prejudices. His was eminently the temperament to deal with materials and constitutions as he found them. He had neither the audacity which attempts reform nor the penetration which foresees its necessity. No repressive law was abolished, no popular change was accomplished, at his own instance, during his long administration. But the machinery of government was preserved unimpaired, the authority of the executive was largely, and perhaps needlessly, increased during his tenure of office.

Lord Eldon.

Lord Eldon was Lord Chancellor for even a longer period than that during which Lord Liverpool remained Prime Minister. He received his high office at the commencement of the century; he retained it, with the exception of one short interval, till the close of Lord Liverpool's ministry. He served as chancellor with five prime ministers, and he survived four out of the five. During his

long political career he undoubtedly made a striking impression on the politics of his time. For twenty-five years his was the genius which withstood all reform, and resisted every change in the constitution of Parliament. By no means bigoted in his own religious views, he would not listen to any proposal for the relief either of the Roman Catholics or of the Dissenters. With a singularly kind heart, he saw no unkindness in punishing the most trivial offences with the extreme penalty of death. His peculiarly just mind discovered no injustice in withholding all share of political power from the great masses of his fellow-countrymen and the most important communities. When he was made Chief Justice he applied to the king, at Lady Eldon's instigation, for leave to wear no wig. "No, no," was George III.'s answer, "I will have no innovations in my time."[1] The dislike which the king entertained to innovation found ready sympathy in the new Chief Justice. Lord Eldon, throughout his long career, might have used the same words, "I will have no innovations in my Chancellorship."

Though he was narrow in his views, and though his influence retarded the accomplishment of many necessary reforms, Lord Eldon's name will always be remembered with honour. His eminent ability, his unflagging industry, his strict honesty, his unfailing consistency, his immovable loyalty, illustrate and adorn his public life: just as his genial manners, his excellent temper, and his cheerful, affectionate disposition endeared him to his family and his friends. Lord Eldon, it must always be recollected to his honour, began life with small advantages. He was the younger son of a Newcastle tradesman, and obtained his education at the free grammar school of the town. His elder brother, William, subsequently famous as Lord Stowell, had been educated at the same place, and had obtained by his ability a scholarship, which had enabled him to proceed to Oxford. By William Scott's advice John Scott was rescued from trade in 1766, and sent to his elder brother at the university. But the wisdom of the proceeding seemed long doubtful.

[1] Twiss's *Eldon*, vol. i. p. 340.

Many years passed before Scott's professional career was cheered by a ray of hope. An accidental opportunity enabled him to achieve a forensic success which ensured his ultimate advancement. "Young man," said a solicitor to him as he left the court, "your bread-and-butter is cut for life." [1] The solicitor's prediction was fulfilled. Within a comparatively short period, Scott won his silk gown; was elected, through Lord Weymouth's interest, to represent the now disfranchised borough of Weobly in Parliament; and, after a Parliamentary career of five years, was knighted and made Solicitor-General. Five years later, or in 1793, Sir John Scott became Attorney-General; in 1799 he was appointed Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas and made Lord Eldon. Lord Eldon filled this office for a very brief period; but in that short time he discharged its duties with an ability which promised to make him a great common law judge. The necessities of political life, however, removed him almost immediately afterwards from the sphere for which he was most eminently qualified. He was promoted to the Chancellorship, and he hardly maintained in the Court of Chancery the high judicial reputation which he had acquired at the Common Pleas. An excessive prudence made him hesitate to decide. Hesitation produced delay and arrears, and the business of his court became hopelessly encumbered with the vast accumulation of business which was the result of the Chancellor's doubts. But, if the Chancellor, in one sense, failed as a judge, he succeeded as a politician. He was, perhaps, the "strongest" member of the Duke of Portland's administration; and the known affection with which the king regarded him increased his influence. The time, indeed, came when Lord Eldon's influence declined. The country moved on; and Lord Eldon stood still. But, to the latest, when deserted by his old friends and laughed at for the opinions which only a few months before they had cheered, the venerable lawyer continued the struggle. He stood almost alone in the breach, striving to repair it, while the rising tide of Emancipation and Reform was surging around him.

[1] Twiss's *Eldon*, vol. i. p 119.

Lord Sidmouth occupied a very different position, both in the cabinet and in the House of Lords, from that which was filled by his near connection, Lord Eldon.[1] He was an ex-prime minister, and, as an ex-prime minister, had a rank, in the estimation of the public, which was enjoyed by none other of Lord Liverpool's colleagues. He was the chief of a small but important party of friends and relatives of his own, whose support no ministry could easily spare. His father, Dr. Addington, had been the favourite physician of the great Lord Chatham. Young Addington grew up in close intimacy with William Pitt. Pitt became Prime Minister, and Addington, whose sister was married to Mr. Sutton, the owner of New Park, became, through his brother-in-law's interest, member for Devizes. At first his chief claim to Parliamentary distinction lay in the favour with which the Prime Minister regarded him. He spoke only rarely, but he applied himself actively to the business of committees. In consequence he acquired a considerable knowledge of the business of the House, and had therefore greater qualifications than his age and his experience would have suggested for the Speakership. Addington was only thirty-two years of age when Pitt selected him for this high dignity on Grenville's retirement from it. Yet, though he was untried and inexperienced, no one seems to have doubted his qualifications for the situation. Even his political opponents, though they opposed his election, declared through Sheridan that they "were all very sorry to vote against" him. The result justified the choice of Pitt and the remark of Sheridan. Addington held the Speakership for nearly twelve years, and is universally admitted to have made an admirable Speaker.

Lord Sidmouth.

The qualifications, however, which fit a man to preside over the House of Commons are not necessarily the same as those which are required for the government of a nation. The same partial preference which had induced Pitt to raise his old friend to the Speakership prompted him to name Addington

[1] Lord Eldon's niece, the daughter of Lord Stowell, was Lord Sidmouth's second wife. She was married to him in 1823.

as the most fitting successor to himself in 1801. Both parties, indeed, at the time, probably regarded the arrangement as provisional. The obstinacy of the king had made Pitt's resignation indispensable; and, till he could return to office, it was convenient that an intimate friend of his own should carry on the government. Provisional arrangements, however, cannot always be terminated at the moment when their modification would be most convenient. Addington concluded a peace, which stamped his ministry with a character of its own. It is true that, on the resumption of hostilities, some of his own colleagues intrigued for the return of Pitt to power, and that the great bulk of the Tory party desired this arrangement. But Addington's resignation was no longer easy or possible. He thought himself his friend's equal, and entitled to negotiate on equal terms with him. The friendship which had lasted between the two statesmen from childhood was violently broken; and its rupture occasioned far greater consequences than the separation of two friends In its ultimate effects it divided the Tory party into two camps; and, but for the folly of Whig statesmen, would have terminated the period of Tory ascendancy.

Lord Liverpool, Lord Eldon, and Lord Sidmouth were the three most prominent members of the administration in the House of Lords. Opposed to them in that house were two men endowed with singular capacity for business and unusual abilities Lord Grenville had been already prime minister; Lord Grey was to become prime minister. Lord Grenville's influence was passing away: Lord Grey's influence was continually increasing. Lord Grenville was essentially the representative of the old Whigs; Lord Grey's name was to become the most honoured in the annals of the modern Whigs. The Grenvilles, whose political influence extended throughout the reign of George III., had been settled for generations at Wootton. In the early years of the eighteenth century Richard Grenville, the then head of the family, who was successively member for Andover and Buckingham, married one Hester, the daughter of Sir Richard Temple, of Stowe,

Lord Grenville.

who gave her name to other Hesters, well known in the pages of history. Hester Temple's brother was made Lord Cobham, with remainder to his sister; and, as he died without issue, Mrs. Grenville succeeded to the barony. To her brother's barony she eventually added a higher title of her own. She was made Countess of Temple. Mr. Grenville and Lady Temple had six children. Her eldest son, Richard, was the famous Lord Temple who, on two occasions, interfered with Lord Chatham's taking office, and who is still thought by some authorities to have been no less a personage than "Junius." Her second son, George, was the famous minister whose obstinacy in proposing the Stamp Act lost the country its richest colony. Her third son, James, was the father of James, first and only Lord Glastonbury; and her daughter, Hester, made Lady Chatham in her own right, was the wife of the great Lord Chatham, and the mother of William Pitt. George Grenville, the Prime Minister, had three sons: George, who succeeded his uncle as Lord Temple, who became Marquis of Buckingham, and whose son was ultimately advanced to a dukedom; Thomas, first Lord of the Admiralty in the Talents administration; and William, who became Prime Minister and Lord Grenville. It is doubtful whether any other woman who ever lived had so distinguished a posterity as Hester, Lady Temple. One of her sons became Prime Minister; another son refused the Premiership. Two of her grandsons became Prime Ministers; and two other grandsons, the second Lord Chatham and Thomas Grenville, held high political office.

At the period at which this history commences Lord Grenville was far the ablest representative of his influential family. Born in 1759, he was fifty-six years of age, the acknowledged head of the Whig party. In 1782 he commenced his Parliamentary career as a member of the House of Commons. Shortly afterwards he obtained, through his cousin Pitt's interest, the lucrative post of Paymaster of the Forces. In 1789, through the same influence, he was elected to the Speakership; and in 1790 he entered the cabinet as Secretary of State for the Home Department. He retired with his cousin in 1801;

but he did not resume office with Pitt in 1804. Up to a certain point, indeed, both these eminent men were agreed at that time. They were both of opinion that the necessities of the age required the formation of a ministry on a broad basis; and they both, consequently, desired to admit Charles Fox into the counsels of their sovereign. George III. objected, and the objections of the king led to a separation between Pitt and Grenville. Pitt concluded that he had no alternative but submission. Grenville considered that the king, and not the minister, should be compelled to submit. Pitt, with a heavy heart, undertook the government without the assistance of Fox; and Fox's exclusion deprived him of the support of the Grenville interest. It is probable that Grenville was right in his anticipations. Several precedents might have been quoted to prove that George III., if he had kept his reason, would have yielded to the minister, and have consented to the admission of Fox into the cabinet. But it is one thing to compel a king to submit, and another thing to risk driving a king out of his mind. Pitt, during the nineteenth century, was always dreading a return of the king's lunacy, and his apprehensions in this respect are known to have modified his policy. Grenville, on the contrary, seems to have considered the possible lunacy of the king a far lesser evil than the abandonment of his own opinions He thought that the king should have been resisted in 1804. He himself resisted him in the commencement of 1807. His conclusions on the first of these occasions separated him for ever from Pitt, his conclusions on the second of them drove him for ever from office.

In one of his essays Lord Brougham has remarked of Lord Grenville's junction with the Whigs that "it was impossible to imagine a greater accession to the popular cause, unless Mr. Pitt himself had persevered in his desire of rejoining the standard under which his first and noblest battles were fought." It is, however, permissible to doubt the justice of this opinion. Had Lord Grenville taken office under Pitt in 1804, he would undoubtedly, on Pitt's death in 1806, have succeeded to the lead of the Tory party. Had Lord Grenville been vested

with the first place in the Tory ranks, Lord Grey would have certainly led the Whigs from the date of Fox's death. The Tories would, in all probability, have been a little less reactionary if they had been led by Lord Grenville; the Whigs would have acted with more consistency and more freedom under the guidance of Lord Grey.

Lord Grey.

Lord Grey, who ultimately became the renovator of the Whig party, was a younger man than Lord Grenville. Born in 1764, he was sent to Eton about the time at which Lord Grenville left it. Without the elegance of his future colleague, he had higher qualities. Brought at an early age into Parliament, one of his first political acts was to support Pitt's proposals for Parliamentary Reform. With the support of Pitt he moved in the matter on his own account in 1792 and 1793; and with Pitt against him he introduced in 1797 a measure for the enfranchisement of copyholders and leaseholders in counties, and for the institution of household suffrage in boroughs. His proposal was rejected by a large majority; but from that date Grey's name was identified with the cause of Reform. Yet Grey had only rare opportunities of asserting his views. The king was opposed to him, the legislature was opposed to him; the people only felt a torpid interest in the subject. Grey himself was almost continuously in opposition. The only occasion on which he enjoyed the fruits of office was during the brief existence of the Talents administration At a critical period, too, his father's death raised him to the House of Peers. The change from the House of Commons, where the Whigs sorely missed his commanding eloquence, to the unsympathetic atmosphere of the House of Lords was not favourable to the reformer. Everything, in short, seemed to conspire to deprive him of a successful career. Yet he must unquestionably be regarded as one of the most successful statesmen of the nineteenth century. His political life is marked by a completeness and consistency, which distinguish it from the careers of all his contemporaries and successors. Peel, indeed, carried far more beneficial measures of relief than even Grey. But the great

questions with which Peel's name is associated only mark the inconsistency of his opinions. Lord John Russell deserved and received a share of the credit attaching to the Reform Bill of 1832; but Lord John Russell's great success was attained on the threshold of his official life; and the statesman lived to see men younger than himself imbued with sympathies for Reform which were stronger than his own. It was the especial good fortune of Lord Grey that he lived to see the success of all the great causes which he had advocated; that he lived to carry the greatest of them all in his own administration; and that, when the work of his life was done, he withdrew from the cares and anxieties of a political career. The greatest revolution which had been ever effected without bloodshedding was accomplished under his auspices; and the veteran had the satisfaction of knowing, in his retirement, that his country approved the reform which he had been instrumental in passing.

The consistency of Lord Grey's career strikingly compares with the inconsistency of Lord Grenville's life. Lord Grey was above all things a reformer, and his opinions never changed. Lord Grenville began life with the same popular sympathies which animated Grey. Like Pitt, he modified his views, and became party to the various repressive measures which characterised the later years of his cousin's government. From the extreme of Toryism he passed over to his opponents, deserted Pitt; formed the Coalition Ministry of 1806; and assumed the lead of the Whig party. But, though nominally the leader of the Whig party, he had little in common with the Whigs. After the conclusion of the war his nephew, the Duke of Buckingham, was seeking for office under Lord Liverpool; and Lord Grenville himself was coquetting with the Tory Government. "Where are the Grenvilles?" wrote Byron "Turned, as usual," is the answer which he immediately gives to his own question. Lord Grey never turned throughout his long career. As minister in 1832 he concluded the work which he had commenced forty years previously.

During the eighteenth century the influence of the House of Commons was so small that the majority of every Government

was composed of peers. On one occasion only one member of the cabinet had a seat in the House of Commons; and the only commoner who was thus distinguished was the near relation of a duke.[1] The influence of the House of Commons had risen since the days of the Duke of Newcastle's government; but the great majority of every ministry was still composed of peers No member of Lord Liverpool's cabinet in the Lower House of Parliament had the ability of Lord Eldon. The leader of the Government in this House, Lord Castlereagh, was "a man of sense, presence of mind and fortitude, which carried him through many an affair of critical moment, when finer talents would have stuck in the mire. He had been indifferently educated; and, his mode of speaking being far from logical or correct, he was sometimes in danger of becoming almost ridiculous in despite of his lofty presence (which had all the grace of the Seymours) and his determined courage"[2] He is said to have once achieved the extraordinary feat of concluding a speech with the monosyllable "its", and the story, whether it be true or not, testifies to the clumsiness with which his sentences were composed. Lord Castlereagh was the eldest son of the first Earl and Marquis of Londonderry. He was educated at Armagh, and was subsequently sent to St. John's College, at Cambridge. His stay at the university was, however, short. He was removed to make what was then called the "grand tour," and visited the principal cities of France, Austria, and Italy. He returned to Ireland in 1790, just before he came of age. The Tory landlords of Down were anxious to contest the county with the representative of Lord Downshire, and desired to obtain Lord Castlereagh as their champion. A contest, costly and severe even for those days, ensued, and resulted in a drawn battle. Each side gained one of the two seats. Lord Castlereagh[1] was returned with one of Lord Downshire's representa-

Lord Castlereagh

[1] Mr. Pelham, in the Duke of Newcastle's administration.

[2] Sir Walter Scott, in Lockhart, p. 643.

[3] It seemed convenient to name Lord Castlereagh from the first by the title by which he is best known. His father was not made an earl, and his son was not, therefore, properly styled Lord Castlereagh till some years afterwards.

tives. It is said that the contest cost £60,000,[1] and that the effects of it seriously crippled Lord Londonderry for the whole of his lifetime.

Castlereagh had been compelled, during the progress of the election, to commit himself to a limited support of the claims of the Roman Catholics; and he therefore consented to the act of partial justice which gave the Roman Catholics of Ireland a vote. This concession, slight as it was, seemed to pave the way for better times. Lord Fitzwilliam was sent as Lord Lieutenant to Ireland. He formed a Liberal administration, of which Grattan, the great Irish patriot, was a member; and the Irish Parliament was induced, by the promise of a liberal policy, to vote a large supply for the purposes of the war. Lord Fitzwilliam's promised concessions were, however, regarded with disfavour in London. Pitt was compelled to disown and recall his Lord Lieutenant; and Lord Camden, with Pelham as his Chief Secretary, was sent in his place to Ireland. Pelham, either from mistaking his instructions or from over-zeal, committed an exactly opposite error to that of Fitzwilliam. At the outset of his career he pronounced a strong determination to resist all further concessions, and found it necessary or prudent in consequence to withdraw from his duties. In the absence of Pelham, and after the refusal of Perceval to take the situation, Lord Camden determined to avail himself of the services of Lord Castlereagh. Castlereagh undertook to perform the duties of Chief Secretary during Pelham's absence. The Irish rebellion of 1798 almost immediately afterwards broke out. The outbreak taxed, to the utmost, the resources of the Irish Government; and, though ultimately repressed at a horrible cost both of money and life,[2] its repression drew attention to the administrative ability of Castlereagh. Lord Camden was replaced by Lord Cornwallis; but Lord Cornwallis continued to avail himself

[1] The *Ann. Reg.* says £30,000, vol. lxiv. p. 619.

[2] Moore, in his life of Lord E. Fitzgerald, says at a cost of 20,000 Royalist and 50,000 rebel lives. Vol. ii. p. 203, note. Alison, in his life of Lord Castlereagh, says, on Lord Castlereagh's authority, of 30,000 lives and £3,000,000. Vol. i. p. 73.

of Castlereagh's services. Though no Irishman had ever been made Chief Secretary for Ireland, Pitt was induced to break through the usual rule in Castlereagh's favour; and, on Pelham's actual retirement, Castlereagh was accordingly appointed to the office which he had virtually filled for the two preceding years.

In consequence of the rebellion of 1798 Pitt was induced to propose an union between Great Britain and Ireland. Cornwallis and Castlereagh both clearly saw that the system under which Ireland was governed was crude and unstable. Nine-tenths of the population consisted of Roman Catholics and Presbyterians; and the remaining tenth, who were faithful to the Established Church, were alone eligible for every office in the State It was evidently essential either to concede the power to the real majority, or to convert a minority into a majority, by fusing the Irish with the English. Such a fusion, it was clear, would subordinate the majority of Roman Catholics in Ireland to the still larger majority of Protestants in Great Britain. The course was taken, and the union resolved on. There was no great difficulty in persuading Great Britain to absorb a smaller country; but there was the greatest difficulty in inducing the smaller country to consent to its own absorption. The Government, in the Irish House of Commons, had no one but Castlereagh to rely on. The Opposition was led by Grattan, Ponsonby, and other debaters of great ability. Castlereagh could hardly be expected to fight on equal terms with such adversaries as these. Yet his superiors seem to have been fully satisfied with the exertions which he made. Though he was defeated, Parliament was dissolved, and the battle was renewed after a general election. Castlereagh had to contend a second time with the same opponents; but he was successful.

Success, however, in the contest which was thus terminated did not turn on Parliamentary qualifications alone. The union was effected by indiscriminate bribery; and in bribery the Government was certain to defeat the Opposition. The latter had nothing but money to rely upon. The former, in addition

to lavish expenditure, had the whole patronage of the State at their disposal. One man wanted a peerage; a second an office; a third a pension. The Opposition was beaten by the bribes and the promises of the Government, and the union was carried. It is creditable to Cornwallis and Castlereagh that they insisted on all the promises which they made being faithfully carried out. But the apprenticeship which Castlereagh thus served was, perhaps, the worst which a young statesman could have gone through. He had spent his time, not in attempting to gain a logical victory over his opponents, but in computing the exact sum at which the support of each of them might be secured. Bribery, to be effective, requires dexterity and tact; but the man who succeeds in the art of corruption need not necessarily be qualified for the higher functions of statesmanship.

Canning.

While Lord Castlereagh was slowly acquiring experience and influence as Chief Secretary for Ireland a man, slightly his junior in point of years, who was destined to become at once his most formidable rival and most able ally, was gradually making his mark in the English House of Commons. George Canning was born in 1770 amidst unpropitious surroundings. His father, the son of an Irish country gentleman, had incurred the displeasure of his parents by contracting an imprudent marriage, and had unfortunately died, leaving his widow in great poverty, while his son was an infant. Mrs. Canning, left to her own resources, went on to the stage, and soon afterwards contracted a second marriage with an actor.[1] Her second husband was a creditable performer in his profession, but dissolute and intemperate. Her son's prospects appeared in such circumstances deplorable. Happily, however, for himself, his family, and his country, his uncle, Mr. Stratford Canning, interfered and rescued the lad from the inevitable consequences of a training in his mother's home. A small Irish estate was settled on the boy, the proceeds of which were sufficient to pay for his education. England probably owes to Mr. Stratford Canning's generous

[1] *Ann Reg.*, vol. lxix. p. 478.

friendship the most brilliant minister of the nineteenth century.

Canning, at an early age, justified the kindness which his uncle had shown to him. He was, perhaps, the most distinguished boy ever known at Eton. His compositions excited marked admiration among men who recollected Lord Wellesley's Latin verses. Nor was it in the dead languages alone that Canning acquired a reputation at school. His contributions to the *Microcosm* proved him a brilliant and ready writer. Canning proceeded from Eton to Oxford, where his career was equally successful. His reputation, in fact, became so great that each of the political parties endeavoured to secure the advantage of his assistance. While he was still at Oxford, Sheridan introduced him to Fox, and obtained for him an invitation to the great Whig houses. In 1793 Pitt made him a direct offer of a seat in Parliament, and in 1796 appointed him Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office. Nor was it in Parliament alone that Canning was proving himself a useful ally to the minister. Outside the House he was contributing to the *Anti-Jacobin* the series of humorous pieces, both in poetry and prose, which almost induce the regret that the author should have ever exchanged literature for politics.

Up to 1801, Castlereagh and Canning, acting under the same leader, had been steadily laying, in different spheres, the foundations of their future eminence. In 1801 they both retired from office with Pitt. Castlereagh was soon afterwards induced to accept a high position under Addington. Canning, on the contrary, was perpetually urging Pitt to attack the feeble ministry; and assailing it himself with all the power of his brilliant and sarcastic pen. Shattered by attacks from all sides, Addington fell. The immediate effect of his fall was the restoration of Pitt to power. Canning and Castlereagh both occupied important positions in the new ministry; Canning, as Treasurer of the Navy; Castlereagh, as President of the Board of Control. The ministry had considerable strength on the Treasury Bench. But it gained little credit. It had no con-

sistency except that which it derived from Pitt's presence. It crumbled into fragments when Pitt died.

During the rule of the Talents Administration the leaders of the Tory party ought to have endeavoured to reconcile their differences. They did nothing of the kind; and, in consequence, when they were unexpectedly required to resume power in 1807, they were unprepared for it. They agreed, however, on serving under the Duke of Portland, whom the king had selected as Prime Minister; and under Perceval in the House of Commons. Canning was partly reconciled to the arrangement by his near connection with the new Prime Minister. He and Lord Titchfield, the duke's eldest son, had married two sisters, the daughters of General Scott; and the marriage had given Canning a large fortune,[1] and the concurrent advantage of easy access to the duke. For a time things went on tolerably smoothly. Every minister managed the affairs of his own department; and the duke, debilitated by disease, exercised merely a nominal control over the ministry. An arrangement of this kind did very well while no great question arose; but it was almost certain to be disturbed when any subject provoking differences of opinion came up for discussion. Subjects of this character were, of course, sure to arise. The convention of Cintra, the attack on the Duke of York, the expedition of Sir John Moore, and the future of Portugal, all created differences of opinion; and on all of them Canning and Castlereagh formed different views. Canning took the extreme step of tendering his resignation in March 1809; and the able letter in which he tendered it, though it contains no distinct charge against any one, was understood by the Prime Minister and the king as a complaint against Castlereagh. The king good-naturedly endeavoured to patch up a quarrel which was already irremediable; the duke foolishly attempted to conceal the whole matter from the parties most nearly concerned in it. King and duke succeeded, by these means, in postponing the difficulty for about four months. It

[1] The marriage was announced in Aris's *Birmingham Gazette* as "with £100,000 fortune." See Grant's *Newspaper Press*, vol. i. p. 130.

recurred then in a worse form than ever. It led to a duel between Castlereagh and Canning, attended with serious but fortunately without fatal consequences; it compelled the Duke of Portland to retire from the ministry; it broke up the Tory party.

There were two persons, on the Duke of Portland's retirement, who aspired to the lead of the Tory party. Perceval had led the House of Commons for two years and a half. For the sake of his party, he had made the sacrifice of abandoning his profession. He was an able debater, and a popular minister. Canning, on the contrary, had a fervid eloquence to which Perceval had no claim. He conceived that he was necessary to the ministry, and that it could not stand without him. However willing he had been to serve under Perceval, while a near connection of his own was Prime Minister, he fancied that the Duke of Portland's retirement altered his status and made a continuance of this arrangement impossible. Perceval, on the other hand, very naturally concluded that, after he had led the House of Commons for two years and a half, he could not act as Canning's lieutenant. Both statesmen had a remedy for the difficulty. Perceval thought it possible, though in other respects undesirable, to place some neutral nobleman in the Duke of Portland's shoes, and resuscitate the Government very much in its original form. Canning hoped to persuade Perceval to take a peerage, with the Presidency of the Council or the Chancellorship, and thus gild his colleague's retirement with promotion and a coronet. Neither Canning nor Perceval was the least inclined to accept the view of the other. Perceval refused the gilded bait, and resolutely declined to oust Lord Eldon. Canning insisted on the necessity of the Prime Minister being in the House of Commons, and declined to act under a neutral nobleman.

Canning's conduct on this occasion has been defended by his later admirers. At the time hardly any one stood up for him. Those who admired his abilities regretted what he had done; those who were either jealous of him or disliked him condemned him in the strongest language. His conduct ulti-

mately destroyed his opportunity. Had he consented to serve under Perceval in 1809 he must have succeeded Perceval as Prime Minister in 1812. His withdrawal from the ministry in 1809 excluded him from office, the first object of his ambition, for nearly seven years. At the time at which this history opens he was employed on a special mission abroad. On his return, in 1816, he accepted the Presidency of the Board of Control. The minister, who might have had the choice of any office, was compelled to content himself with a comparatively obscure department. The statesman who declined to serve under Perceval was compelled to serve under Perceval's subordinate, Castlereagh. "How striking is Canning's example!" wrote Wilberforce. "Had he fairly joined Perceval on the Duke of Portland's death, as Perceval offered, he would now have been the acknowledged head, and supported as such. But his ambitious policy threw him out, and he sunk infinitely in public estimation, and has since with difficulty kept buoyant."[1] "As for Canning," wrote another contemporary, himself one of the minister's warmest friends, "with his immense talent, wit, and eloquence, he unhappily wants prudence and patience, and in his eager desire to scramble to the highest point is not sufficiently select as to his assistants"[2] "Voltaire observes," wrote a third of Canning's friends, "that men succeed less by their talents than their character. He is comparing Mazarin and De Retz. Walpole and Bolingbroke make a similar pair in the last century. Castlereagh and Canning are remarkable examples of the truth of the maxim which our own days have furnished."[3]

The ministry had leaders of considerable eminence in Castlereagh and Canning The nominal lead of the Opposi-

[1] Wilberforce, vol. iv. p 33.

[2] Sir Walter Scott's Diary, in Lockhart, p 658.

[3] Ward's correspondence with the Bishop of Llandaff, p. 301. Almost as severe is Sir Walter Scott's record of his friend's death. "The death of the Premier is announced—late George Canning—the witty, the accomplished, the ambitious, he who had toiled thirty years, and involved himself in the most harassing discussions to attain this dizzy height; he who had held it for three months of intrigue and obliquy—and now a heap of dust, and that is all."—Lockhart, p. 662.

tion was held by a man who never acquired any great Parliamentary distinction in England. George Ponsonby was the grandson of the first Earl of Bessborough. His father, John Ponsonby, Lord Bessborough's second son, became Speaker of the Irish House of Commons. John Ponsonby's second and most distinguished son, George, received a lucrative appointment from the Rockingham Administration, but was removed from it by Lord Buckingham in 1787. Vexation at the loss of his office drove him into a political career, and he obtained a seat in the Irish House of Commons. Though the Opposition, to which he allied himself, was led by such men as Grattan and Flood, he succeeded in attaining distinction, which commended him to the notice of the Whigs; and, on the Talents Administration coming into office, he was made Lord Chancellor of Ireland. One Grenville had driven him into politics by depriving him of his appointment; another Grenville had rewarded his support with a much higher situation. In 1807, after Lord Howick's accession to his father's peerage, the Whigs were in need of a leader. Sheridan was too involved in his pecuniary circumstances to be thought of. Tierney had claims on the party, but he did not enjoy the confidence of Lord Grenville. Whitbread, though honest, sincere, and acute, was a brewer, and the Whigs were not prepared to follow a tradesman. A process of exhaustion compelled them to think of Ponsonby; and Ponsonby was, accordingly, invested with the leadership of his party. For the first and probably last time in history the House of Commons was led by two lawyers. An ex-attorney-general on one side; an ex-Irish chancellor on the other.

Ponsonby.

Ponsonby never made any great mark as leader; but, on the other hand, he excited no ill-will. "His language and manners were those of a gentleman; and, disdaining a flowery and figurative diction, he only aimed at stating arguments fully and forcibly, in which he often succeeded."[1] But, while Ponsonby was thus obtaining a limited success, a much greater orator was rapidly extending the reputation which he had

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, vol. lix. p. 145.

already acquired in another place. Henry Grattan was born in 1746. His father was a barrister, and Recorder of Dublin. The son received his education at Trinity, where he became acquainted with Fitzgibbon, and where he gained the highest honours. In 1772 he followed his father's footsteps, and was called to the Bar. But he made no figure in his profession, and never seriously attended to it. Some few years after his call an accidental circumstance introduced him to Lord Charlemont, who was, at that time, looking out for some promising young man capable of expounding the grievances of Ireland in the Irish House of Commons. Flood had seceded from the popular cause, and had accepted a lucrative office under the Irish Government. Ireland had thus been deserted in the hour of her need and of her opportunity by her most powerful advocate

Grattan.

For, if the need of Ireland were great, her opportunity was extraordinary. England, committed to the hopeless task of subduing America, had no troops to spare for the rebellious subjects nearer home, whom she disdained to conciliate. Ireland, under the pretext of protecting her own shores, filled the streets of her capital with armed volunteers Her Senate, sharing the enthusiasm which had called her people to arms, passed, on Grattan's eloquent appeal, the resolutions of 1779 and 1782, the former securing the country the advantage of free trade, the latter obtaining for her self-government. A grateful Senate zealously rewarded the eloquent leader under whom such triumphs had been achieved. It was proposed to vote £100,000 to Grattan in testimony of his services; Grattan's own moderation limited the grant to £50,000 Grattan, for the moment, was the most popular among Irishmen. But the Irish are as fickle in their applause as they are inconstant in their labours. Flood rose in the House to cast a slur on Grattan's great victory. He had repealed the Act of George I. which had deprived Ireland of her right of self-government. But, according to Flood, the Act of George I. was only declaratory of the right of the English Parliament to legislate for Ireland. Its enactment had settled nothing;

its repeal had altered nothing. Grattan warmly defended his own policy. Flood keenly strove to outbid his rival. Grattan twitted Flood with his place; Flood retorted on Grattan that he had accepted money. The contention was so warm that it nearly passed from words to blows. Nothing but the intervention of the House prevented a duel. The great Irish Revolution had ended in an Irish row.

So closed the greatest episode in Grattan's career. When the union was proposed he was living near London, in comparative retirement, and in bad health. His country, in its necessity, thought of the great orator whom it had by turns adored and despised. Grattan was urged to set out for Ireland; and, though there was considerable risk to his health in the journey, and possible peril to his life from the animosities of his fellow-countrymen, he at once returned to Dublin. Elected for Wicklow, he took his seat amidst the enthusiasm of the House, and, though evidently ill and compelled to sit, delivered one of his most brilliant speeches. A violent attack was immediately made on him by Corry, the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer. Grattan resented the language; a hostile meeting ensued, and Corry was wounded It was afterwards stated that Grattan had been elected at twelve, that he had been received by the House at four, and that he had wounded Corry at eight of the same day. Some years elapsed before Grattan sought a seat in the English House of Commons. Far the most eloquent man on the Liberal benches, he never aspired to any great Parliamentary distinction. He devoted himself to urging the claims of his Roman Catholic fellow-citizens; and never was a just cause illustrated and adorned by a more able exponent. Grattan did not live to see the victory of his principles; but a Parliament, which admired the orator who had not been able to convince it, voted him the highest honours. The great Irish patriot sleeps among the mighty English dead in Westminster Abbey. The statue of the great Irish orator stands in the vestibule of the British Parliament. But the grave at Westminster and the statue at St. Stephen's do not form the most

enduring monument to Grattan's fame. History, when she records the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, will always associate this act of justice with the name of Grattan.[1]

The Irish in the House of Commons

A short fifteen years had elapsed since the union. The smaller nation had been absorbed in the larger against its will. And what was the result? The leader of the Government in the House of Commons was the eldest son of an Irish peer! The leader of the Opposition was the grandson of an Irish peer! The most eloquent orator on the ministerial benches was the grandson of an Irish country gentleman! The most eloquent orator on the Opposition benches was the great Irish patriot! The Irish, amidst all their despondency, might have exclaimed with the Roman poet—

> "Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit, et artes
> Intulit agresti Latio"

No other member of the House of Commons in 1816 could be ranked with either Canning or Castlereagh, Ponsonby or Grattan. In addition to Castlereagh and Canning, three other members of the Cabinet, Vansittart, Bathurst, and Pole, held seats in the House of Commons, while three subordinate members of the ministry, Robinson, Peel, and Palmerston, all of whom ultimately became Prime Ministers, had seats on the Treasury Bench. The time had not yet arrived when Peel and Palmerston proved their mettle, and Castlereagh was consequently compelled to rely on the other four, Bathurst, Vansittart, Robinson, and Pole. What these four were may be inferred from the contemptuous expression of a close observer: "I look on Bathurst, Vansittart, Robinson, and Pole as nothing," or from the more elaborate explanation which the same writer subsequently gave of this sentiment: "Van does not speak much but upon his own business. Bathurst is not much listened to, and is conscious of it. Pole rarely speaks, but when he does is always in a passion; and as to Robinson, he seems to do nothing but occasionally answer a question on trade. It is, therefore, cruel of the Opposition

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1820, p. 1174; Parnell's *Hist. of the Penal Laws.*

(as Walter Scott once told Morritt) to plague 'poor dumb creatures.'"[1]

Vansittart deserves the first place among these four men. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer, and, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had greater opportunities of distinguishing himself than almost any man who ever lived. He became finance minister on Perceval's death in 1812. He filled this position till 1823. For nearly eleven years, therefore, he was responsible for the financial arrangements of the country; and these eleven years were financially the most critical that England ever saw. The first three years of his administration witnessed the conclusion of the fearful war in which this country had been so long engaged. The eight last years of his administration were memorable for profound peace During the former of these periods a financier had abundant occasion of displaying his resources; during the latter of them a finance minister had still greater opportunities of establishing a reputation for ability. Vansittart never showed any dexterity in devising taxation; he was equally incapable of perceiving the advantage of dispensing with it. His long rule at the Exchequer is not associated with a single measure of any importance. The repeal of the income tax in 1816 was carried, in his face, by the victory of the Opposition; the war malt tax was surrendered, against the minister's will, to allay the discontent of the country gentlemen, the return to cash payments was conducted under the guidance of an independent member. "Nick," as he was familiarly styled by some of his friends, or "Van," as he was nicknamed by others, was universally popular, but he was feared by no one. After eleven years' service as Chancellor of the Exchequer he was dismissed from his office by a letter in the handwriting of Lord Liverpool's private secretary.[2]

Vansittart.

Frederick Robinson, who ultimately became Vansittart's successor, was a younger man than any of those who have hitherto been mentioned. The second son of the second Lord Grantham, he inherited a taste for

Robinson.

[1] Mr. Wilbraham to Lord Colchester. Colchester, vol. iii. pp. 163 and 201.
[2] Colchester, vol. iii. p. 272.

political life. Born in 1782, at the termination of the war he had not completed the thirty-third year of his age, and he owed the position, which he had already attained in the political world, more to the accident of his birth than to any qualities of his own. Robinson had been educated at Harrow and at Cambridge; he had become private secretary to Lord Hardwicke, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland under Addington's Administration, before he was of age, Perceval introduced him to responsible office as Under-Secretary of the Colonies and as a Lord of the Admiralty; Liverpool promoted him to the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade. He still occupied this subordinate position at the close of the war, but he was already regarded as one of the most probable recipients of political promotion. Few people, indeed, could have foreseen how rapid his advancement was to become. He became President of the Board of Trade in 1818, Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1823, Secretary of State for the Colonies and Lord Goderich in 1827, and Prime Minister a few months afterwards. "An easy-going cob, accustomed to single or double harness, quiet under the saddle, and having no objection to the plough, the harrow, or the mill."[1]

Robinson must have had some qualifications, besides his birth, to win for him these rapid promotions, but it is almost impossible for the historian to detect where these qualifications lay. "He was not quick, he was wanting in decision, he saw the end long before he saw the means, and his too sanguine hopes and self-complaisant disposition often led him into difficulties for which there was no escape without ridicule."[2] The serene composure with which, in a period of distress, he expounded his budgets, won for him the name of Prosperity Robinson. His good nature subsequently acquired for him the nickname of "Goody Goderich." After rising to the very highest station in the State, he fell, and became relatively insignificant. Succeeding to another title, men forgot that the amiable nobleman, whom they knew as Lord Ripon, had once been nicknamed Prosperity Robinson and Goody Goderich;

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1859, p. 476. [2] Ibid., p. 475.

and, oblivious of the fact that in the days of their fathers he had filled many offices in the State and had been Prime Minister, they asked, "Who was Lord Ripon?" when the ex-Prime Minister died.[1]

Such were the men on whom Castlereagh and Canning mainly relied in the session of 1816. The opposition side of the House had far more ability at its disposal. Ponsonby and Grattan were indeed hardly equal to Castlereagh and Canning. But Castlereagh and Canning had no such subordinates to rely on as Tierney, Whitbread, Brougham, Romilly, and Horner. It was the misfortune of the Whig party to lose four of its strongest representatives, Ponsonby, Whitbread, Romilly, and Horner, at the most critical period of its history, almost immediately after the conclusion of the war. Tierney and Brougham are therefore the only two of these personages who exercised any lasting influence on English politics.

Tierney's career illustrates, in a striking way, the jealousy which the Whigs entertained of new men. Had he been the son of a country gentleman, or the distant relative of a peer, he would probably have succeeded to the lead of the Whig party in 1807, and have left a great name behind him in the annals of the Whigs. Being only the son of a Spanish merchant, he never acquired the confidence of his party. Nothing but his wealth secured him a seat in Parliament, nothing but the death of all his rivals gained him ultimately the nominal lead[2] He represented in the course of his career Colchester, Southwark, Athlone, Bandon Bridge, Appleby, and Knaresborough. His elections must have cost him a fortune At Colchester there was a double return; he only gained his seat for Southwark, which he had lost after a

Tierney

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1859, p. 476.

[2] The lead which he enjoyed was only nominal. The Grenvillites can hardly be said to have acted with him. At the commencement of 1818, Wynn, Stanhope, and Phillimore quietly seceded from the Opposition, and endeavoured to form the nucleus of a third party: Fremantle and Bankes became their allies, and other moderate Whigs were disposed to flirt with them.—*Memoirs of Regency*, vol. ii. pp. 211, 226, 233. The extravagant price at which the services of the third party were ultimately secured by the Tory Government will be related further on.

costly contest, by a costly petition. In 1807 he offered Lord Abingdon's trustees £10,000 for the two seats at Westbury.[1] Expenditure of this lavish description did not however obtain for him any compensating advantages. He held office three times in his life, once under Addington in 1803, once under the Talents Administration in 1806, and once under Canning in 1827. But he never filled any higher office than the Presidency of the Board of Control, he never held any office for twelve months in succession; his name has almost dropped out of history; and the circumstance for which he is now best remembered is the duel which he once fought with Pitt.

Yet Tierney was one of the last statesmen who deserve to be forgotten. He lived amongst a race of Parliamentary giants, and even in such circumstances he made his mark. "Addington used to say that there was no one whose Parliamentary talents he envied more than Tierney's, as he always expressed his meaning in the clearest manner, and said neither more nor less than he intended."[2] His eloquence was colloquial, he was unrivalled in restating the argument of an opponent and turning it to ridicule. Men wondered as they listened to him how they themselves could have failed to detect the absurdity of the reasoning which was thus consummately exposed.[3] His great powers of sarcasm, his admirably simple language, his readiness and dexterity, made him a particularly efficient debater. When Fox seceded from Parliament in 1798, Tierney supplied his place and managed by the vehemence of his attacks to maintain a show of opposition. Yet it was humorously said at that time that the opposition generally went home to dinner with Tyrwhit Jones in his coach. "Ponsonby reinstated in the nominal lead of the Opposition," wrote Speaker Abbot in January 1810, but, he added, "Tierney the efficient man on that side."[4]

Brougham was an abler man than Tierney, and a more formidable opponent to his adversaries. In one sense he had more brilliant powers than any of his contemporaries. There

[1] Romilly, vol. ii. p. 200.
[2] Sidmouth, vol ii. p. 135.
[3] Memoir, *Ann. Reg.*, 1830.
[4] Colchester, vol. ii. p. 225.

were men among them who could beat him on any given subject, but there was no one who had so extended an acquaintance with so many matters. He was ready to discuss a scientific problem with Playfair, to argue a point of law with Copley, or a question of policy with Canning. He could make a speech with the same facility with which he could write an article; and he could write an article as easily as another man could write a letter. His physical strength admirably assisted his extraordinary intellectual power. During the Yorkshire election he spent his days, from nine till four, arguing cases in court, his evenings, from four till twelve, in canvassing the county; and after midnight he commenced reading his briefs for the work of the morrow. Yet, with all this amazing physical and intellectual activity, his figure hardly fills the prominent place in history which his abilities might have won for him. At one period of his career he was undoubtedly the most powerful political personage of his day. But he lived to see the time when his influence was smaller than that of many minor politicians. His restless energy, admirably adapted for the work of an opposition leader in the House of Commons, was ill-suited for the calmer atmosphere of the House of Lords; and the coronet, which he received with the Chancellorship in Lord Grey's Administration, ultimately extinguished his political career. It would be unfair to say of Brougham that he was "Jack of all trades, and master of none," for he was undoubtedly pre-eminent in many different occupations. But Brougham's career does afford a striking proof that the most splendid abilities are not equal to attaining absolute priority in a great many fields at the same time. Brougham might have attained the eminence of Fox as a politician, of Erskine as an advocate, of Playfair as a mathematician, of Herschel as an astronomer, of Hallam as an historian. He tried to rival all these characters in their various stations; and, in consequence, though he ran a good second to them all, he did not win quite the first place in any race.

Brougham.

Brougham has left behind him his own autobiography; but

his autobiography is rather a record of the writer's weaknesses than of his greatness. It abounds in proofs of the egotistic vanity which marred his career: it suggests the presumption that the writer was either too careless to be accurate, or that he wilfully in his old age altered the correspondence which he had written in his youth. Some of the arguments which Colenso has used against the authenticity of the Pentateuch might be employed with crushing effect against Lord Brougham. He gravely produces a letter, which he alleges to be from George III. to the Prince of Wales, but which was really written by George II. to George III.'s father; and founds an argument upon it. He mentions the Duchess of Kent in 1815, though the duke did not marry till 1818! He makes one of his correspondents speak of Palmerston as Secretary of War and in the Cabinet in August 1809, though Palmerston was not Secretary of War for more than a month afterwards, and was not in the Cabinet for another twenty years. These mistakes, it must be remembered, do not occur in a posthumous memoir, but in letters professedly written at the time, incorporated into the memoir. How could anybody in 1809 have spoken of Palmerston as Secretary for War and in the Cabinet? How could Brougham in 1815 have spoken of a Duchess of Kent when there was no Duchess of Kent till 1818? The inference is irresistible. The veteran, in compiling his memoirs, must have wilfully altered or rewritten the correspondence of his youth. In either case his authority is less trustworthy than that of any other contemporary writer.

Romilly.

Sir Samuel Romilly filled a larger figure in the House of Commons than most of his contemporaries In an assembly, where most men took rank from their abilities, he gained precedence from his character. Mackintosh, in 1810, while living at Bombay, wrote of him: "His moral character, I think, stands higher than that of any other conspicuous Englishman now alive"[1] After an interval of more than half a century the truth of Mackintosh's observation is still apparent. It would be easy to name statesmen who had

[1] Mackintosh, vol. ii. p. 34.

higher abilities, and who did greater service than Romilly to the State. It would be hard to name one who so consistently and so disinterestedly endeavoured to benefit humanity.

Romilly was descended from a Huguenot family. His grandfather, flying from the religious tyranny of Louis XIV., settled in London as a wax bleacher. His business was unsuccessful; bankruptcy and poverty overtook him, his gentle spirit sank under an accumulation of misfortune, and he died at an early age, leaving four sons and four daughters unprovided for. Peter Romilly, the youngest of these sons, was bound apprentice to a jeweller; he worked as a journeyman; he married; and had six children. But the six children all died; and Peter Romilly, imagining that a town residence was unwholesome, hired some lodgings in the then purer air of Marylebone. The experiment was successful. In course of time three other children were born to him, all of whom attained maturity. Samuel Romilly, the youngest of the three, was educated with his brother by a brutal master at a day school in Marylebone

The time soon arrived when it was necessary for young Romilly to commence life in earnest. He was distantly related to Sir Samuel Fludyer, who, like Whittington, had raised himself by his labour to opulence and the mayoralty. Sir Samuel was young Romilly's godfather, and offered him a situation in his counting-house. Sir Samuel's death interfered with this arrangement, and Romilly's father decided on educating both his sons for his own business. Young Romilly, however, hated the work. At an opportune moment a distant relative left him and his family a few thousand pounds; and, with this moderate increase of fortune, Romilly left his father's shop, and was articled to one of the sworn clerks in Chancery. But Romilly did not long persevere in his new calling. A sworn clerk's seat would have cost him £2000, and have absorbed his little fortune. Again changing his career, he entered the Society of Gray's Inn, and commenced studying the law. His studies were interrupted by bad health. But, when he was twenty-six years old, he was called to the Bar, and obtained a little employment in drawing pleadings.

Few people would have imagined at this period that Romilly had any chance of making a figure in the world. He had changed his profession three times; his health was bad; his education imperfect; the time, which he might have given to the Bar, was frequently devoted to writing political pamphlets One of these pamphlets, however, induced Lord Lansdowne to take a warm interest in the writer. Lord Lansdowne encouraged him to persevere in his legal studies The advice was taken; and Romilly's perseverance was rewarded. His business gradually improved. When the Talents Administration came into office, Romilly, though he had no seat in Parliament, was made Solicitor-General He was almost immediately afterwards elected for the now disfranchised borough of Queenborough. Romilly held office for a little more than a year. He remained in Parliament, as member for Queenborough, Horsham, Wareham, Arundel, and Westminster, for rather more than twelve years He was not distinguished as a great advocate; he was not eminent as a Parliamentary speaker. His political life was full of disappointments; he was constantly in a minority; and he was rarely able to carry any of the measures which he was continually promoting. Notwithstanding these constant failures, however, Romilly's name stands higher, and deserves to stand higher, than that of almost any of his contemporaries Had he devoted his career to any particular object he might possibly have been rewarded with greater success. But Romilly's kind heart was equally moved by the oppression of the criminal, the pauper, the little child, or the dumb animal. His life was spent in waging one long battle against excessive punishments, oppressive laws, savage sports, and cruelty to animals. He died before the principles, which he had spent his life in enforcing, had obtained general acceptance.

Such were the leading statesmen in the two Houses of the Legislature at the close of the great war. Every member of the House of Commons ranked of course below the Speaker; and the Speaker of the time, though of less consequence than most of those who have hitherto been mentioned, had an exaggerated opinion of his own importance.

Abbot.

Charles Abbot, the first Lord Colchester, was the younger son of a country gentleman. His father's family was respectable, and the son received a gentleman's education at Westminster and Christchurch. He left Oxford in 1778, and, after a short tour on the Continent, took chambers in Lincoln's Inn, with a view to studying the law. Five years afterwards, or in 1783, he was called to the Bar. But, after eleven years' practice, he abandoned his profession, and accepted an easy and dignified office—the Clerkship of the Rules in the Court of King's Bench. The position, which Abbot was thus fortunate enough to secure, was worth £2700 a year. The leisure, which its acceptance obtained for him, induced him to meditate on the possibility of entering Parliament. The Duke of Leeds had known him, years before, as a Westminster boy, and the Duke's friendship procured for him a convenient and comfortable seat at Helston. Abbot soon found abundant occupation in the House of Commons, but his occupations were very different from those of most of his contemporaries. When he spoke he spoke with credit; but he was only tempted on rare occasions to take part in debate. No member of the House, however, devoted himself with greater zeal to the business of Committees. He discovered that a great many temporary laws expired without observation; he obtained a Committee which made a Register of temporary laws and removed the danger. He presided over the Finance Committee of 1797; he moved for an inquiry into the National Records; he introduced the first Census Bill. By these various means he acquired the reputation of an able and industrious member; and became obviously designed for important office.

The resignation of Pitt in 1801 afforded an opening for the plodding member. Addington the Speaker became Prime Minister. Mitford, afterwards Lord Redesdale, became Speaker; and Abbot, after a good deal of negotiation, was prevailed on to accept the Chief-Secretaryship of Ireland. But his career in Ireland was a very short one. Before a year was over Mitford became Lord Redesdale and Irish Chancellor, and Abbot was selected to succeed Mitford in the chair

of the House of Commons. He occupied that chair for the unusually long period of fifteen years; and though, on one memorable occasion, his conduct in the chair was vehemently attacked, he is almost universally admitted to have made a firm, impartial, and dignified Speaker. Instinctively conservative in all his proceedings, he stickled sometimes to an almost ludicrous extent for his own rights, and the rights of the House. In the notorious proceedings which followed the arrest of Sir Francis Burdett in 1810, for instance, he openly advocated extreme measures, which would have changed the House of Commons from a representative chamber into an engine of arbitrary government.

Abbot, however, will not be mainly remembered for the many virtues and trifling defects which he displayed in the chair of the House of Commons. Posterity will chiefly associate him with the remarkable diary which he kept through the whole of his Parliamentary career. Night after night, when the business of the day was over, Abbot was in the habit of jotting down in one or two short sentences the information which he had acquired in the previous twenty-four hours. The diary admirably illustrates the impartiality of the Speaker's character. It contains a mass of information, which no one desirous of ascertaining the history of those times can neglect. But it is the dullest of all the dull biographies in the language. In the whole 2000 pages, there is hardly a sentence which stirs the reader's pulse or an anecdote which provokes a smile.

The men, whose careers have been thus briefly reviewed, held the chief places in the two Houses of Parliament at the time at which this history commences. At that period opinion, or the opinion of those who possessed power, was almost unanimous in approving the policy and the measures of the Liverpool Administration. It was the prevalent tone of thought, or the tone of thought prevalent in what was called society, which made it practicable for Sidmouth to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, for Castlereagh to force the Alien Act through Parliament, and for Vansittart to place prohibitory duties on foreign wool. *The ministers of 1816 were not harsher than*

their other contemporaries; their single fault lay in their too close agreement with the opinions of those among whom they lived. That agreement was the origin of their power in their own lifetime. It enabled them to obtain an easy triumph over their political opponents. But posterity has reversed the judgment of contemporary critics. Ten years after Lord Liverpool died, the policy which was pursued by his administration had not a single advocate, and those members of his ministry were regarded with the most favour who were supposed to be the least identified with his opinions. So has it constantly been from the days of Alfred to the days of Victoria. Contemporary critics have applauded the statesmen who spent their time in a vigorous defence of existing abuses. Posterity has awarded the chief fame to their opponents who passed their days in assailing them. The fame of Lord Liverpool in 1816 overshadowed the slender authority of Lord Grey. The position of Lord Castlereagh was more enviable than that of Sir Samuel Romilly. Yet the barren honours of Grey and Romilly seem now far preferable to the stars and ribands with which Liverpool and Castlereagh were rewarded. The latter are associated with traditions which have been abandoned in disgust; the former are identified with reforms, which have given peace and happiness to a contented people.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAST OF THE EBB TIDE.

THE definite conclusion of peace in the summer of 1815 was hailed with the liveliest acclamations of gratitude by the people of this country. The war, with its burdens and its sorrows, was over; and a new era of prosperity seemed to be beginning. The nation had increased in wealth during the continuance of the struggle; it seemed impossible to exaggerate the development which might be expected to occur in its resources when the burdens of warfare were removed. The prospect of an almost boundless prosperity dazzled the eyes of even sober observers.

The return of peace.

A little consideration, however, might have induced the calmer minds among the English nation to hesitate before accepting this conclusion. Economists had already taught them that the prosperity of nations depends on the laws of demand and supply; and that any over-production of the commodities which a country supplies, or any failure in the demand for them, must restrict the use of capital, reduce the employment of labour, and consequently impoverish both the capitalist and the labourer. The circumstances of the war had largely increased the demand for British manufactures. Britain was the only country in the old world which had escaped the dangers and distresses of invasion. The foreign manufacturer hesitated to build his factory on a site which might at any moment be devastated by hostile armies; and the British manufacturer, relying from his immunity in the past on security in the future, and encouraged by the cessation of foreign competition, reared his factory on every rivulet where there was water to turn his wheel, or by

Effects of the war on capital.

any colliery where there was coal to feed his engine. Britain, which had previously been little more than a pastoral country, and whose most important manufacture had depended on the excellence of the fleeces which her flocks produced, suddenly became the centre of every industry. Capital could be safely invested in Britain alone; and capital, as a necessary consequence, was invested in Britain. The safety from invasion, to which the country owed her new industry, was won for her by the victories of her sailors, which had swept her enemies from every sea. But the supremacy which she had acquired on the ocean gained for her manufacturers other advantages than mere immunity from invasion. The nation, whose flag waved supreme on every sea, extended its dominion and carried its trade to the remotest countries of the known world. The mistress of the seas obtained a monopoly of the carrying trade. Other nations could only obtain the produce of foreign countries through British shipowners, or on conditions determined by British statesmen. In one sentence, twenty years of war had concentrated the trade of the world in the British empire.

War, indeed, in another sense had been injurious to trade. War is a state of things under which two or more communities endeavour to inflict the maximum of damage upon each other. It destroys life, it hampers production; it dissipates the accumulations of previous years; it impoverishes the nation which is afflicted by it. The great war must have restricted the purchasing capacity of the majority of individuals in every European country. But, though it decreased the purchasing capacity of populations, it did not decrease their purchases in British markets. They spent perhaps £100 where they had previously spent £1000. But the £1000 had been expended in the Netherlands, in Italy, in France, and in other countries; the £100 was expended in Britain. War, too, though it decreased the purchasing capacity of populations, increased the necessities of governments. Every European nation suddenly launched into huge expenditure. Every European nation found itself compelled,

On trade.

not merely to increase its existing revenues, but to mortgage the revenues of future years. The vast load of debt was accumulated for purposes which left Europe poorer and feebler than it had been before. The inordinate outlay on maintaining armies and destroying armies hampered the industry of the existing generation, and harassed the operations of their descendants. But even this unprofitable expenditure could not be carried on without stimulating the operations of the trader. Armies could not be fed, or clothed, or armed, or moved, without appliances which trade alone could supply. The enormous operations of the war led, moreover, to a constant and deplorable waste of material. The waste had, in some way or other, to be made good, and the nation, which had become the great workshop and trading centre of the world, was indirectly benefited in consequence.

Every operation of the great war tended, therefore, to concentrate the trade of the world in this country. A similar chain of circumstances had increased the demand for the produce of British agriculture. Agriculture on the Continent languished under a system whereby the men were driven from the fields to the camp, and the women, left alone to cultivate the ground, were in apprehension of the dissipation of their store from some hostile incursion. The British farmer, on the contrary, sowed his fields with a conscious sense of security. The vast warlike operations in which the British nation was engaged compelled its Government to become a large purchaser of agricultural produce. The increase of population involved an additional demand for food, and the increasing wealth of the manufacturing classes made this demand still greater. These various circumstances combined to encourage British farming, and to augment the wealth of the British landowner. Vast as was the manufacturing progress of the nation during the twenty years of the great war, the progress of its agriculture was almost as marked.

On agriculture.

The prosperity of the landed and trading classes during the years of war, it may be supposed, ought to have bene-

fited the labouring poor. There appears, however, to be very little doubt that the rate of wages rose, but slightly, in the period, and that the rise, slight as it was, was more than balanced by the increased cost of the labourer's food. It is probable that this result was partly due to the circumstance which, in its ultimate consequences, has conferred unprecedented benefits on the British workman. The demand for British manufactured goods led to the discoveries which augmented twenty-fold the productive power of every labourer. Factories were built, employing large numbers of men, and enabling the country to supply a demand which, under the old system, could never have been met. But the erection of every new factory entailed an enormous amount of misery on the solitary weavers who, in their humble cottages, had previously imperfectly supplied the trade of the world It is true that the weaver could always obtain work from the manufacturer. But the weaver was a solitary man: he had no union to arrange terms for him; with instant ruin before him he was compelled to accept any wages which the manufacturer chose to offer; and, if he refused the terms, the employer had only to send to the London workhouses for a cartload of apprentices. Such a state of things must have involved considerable hardships to the better classes among the poor. The chain of events, which had improved the position of the landowner and the capitalist, had not alleviated the hardships to which the poor were exposed.

On labour

Such was the position of affairs at the conclusion of the great war. Peace did not increase the means or the number of foreign purchasers; it withdrew from the markets of the world the demands which the war itself had occasioned. The people, burdened with taxation, found themselves no richer from the termination of the contest. The governments suddenly reduced their expenditure by one-half.[1] Trade had been stimulated by the extravagant outlay of the

Effects of peace.

[1] The British expenditure fell from £106,800,000, in 1815, to £53,300,000 in 1818.—*Progress of the Nation*, p. 483.

belligerent nations. The first results of peace and retrenchment were to withdraw the demand by which industry had been sustained. Prices rapidly fell, and the general fall in prices diminished the demand for labour, and reduced the wages of the labouring classes who could still find work. Capital, to put the same thing in another way, failed to obtain the same amount of employment; the capitalists were unable to employ the same amount of labour. Thousands of labourers, thrown out of work, were forced upon the rates. The remainder were compelled to accept lower wages.[1]

Cash payments.

The rapid fall of prices necessarily spread consternation among the manufacturing classes; and the manufacturers had another reason for serious apprehension. By the terms of the Bank Restriction Act of 1797 cash payments had been suspended during the continuance of the war and for six months afterwards. The conclusion of peace suggested the probability of their resumption; and the bare possibility of such a result was sufficient to alarm the most sober mind. During the earlier years of the war the price of gold had not been materially affected by the issue of incon-

[1] It is necessary to substantiate a statement of this character with a few figures, but a very few figures will show more clearly than a long array of numbers the change which had taken place. The official value of the imports rose, during the war, from £19,659,358 in 1792, to £32,620,771 in 1814 It fell to £31,822,053 in 1815, and to £26,374,921 in 1816 During the same period the official value of the exports of British produce rose from £18,336,851 in 1792, to £41,712,002 in 1815. It fell to £34,774,521 in 1816 The foreign and colonial produce exported increased from £6,568,349 in 1792, to £19,157,818 in 1814. It fell to £15,708,435 in 1815, to £13,441,665 in 1816, and to £10,269,271 in 1817. (M'Culloch, ad verb. Imports and Exports.) The changes in the official values of our exports and imports indicate, it must be remembered, equal variations in quantities. The official values were not allowed to vary with every change in the market, but were as rigid and invariable as the rules with which red tape is associated. It is clear, therefore, that the first consequence of peace was to reduce our import trade by nearly 20 per cent., our export trade by 16 per cent, and to deprive Great Britain of the advantage—which the war had given her—of being the great entrepôt for the world. The price of copper fell, at the conclusion of the war, from £180 to £80 per ton; that of iron from £20 to £8; that of hemp from £118 to £34; and other commodities were affected, not to the same, but to a great extent.—*Life of Lord Sidmouth*, vol. iii p. 153, note. Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, p. 428

vertible paper; but its price was seriously raised during the later years of the struggle. It fell as rapidly at its close.[1] Every commercial operation was necessarily disturbed by these sudden variations. Every commercial operation had been calculated on the hypothesis that gold, which was continually rising in value, would go on rising. It suddenly fell. The price of every article had been increased with the rise in the value of gold. The price of every article fell with the fall in its value. A merchant had imported large quantities of goods, and had contemplated disposing of them at 10 per cent. profit. The mere change in the value of the currency caused prices to drop 15 per cent. Instead of a gain of 10 per cent. he had incurred a loss of 5 per cent. As a matter of fact the drop was in most cases very much greater. The rise in prices generally exceeded the rise in the price of gold. The fall in the value of gold was less than the fall in the value of other commodities.

These considerations, obvious as they appear now, do not seem to have occurred to any member of the Cabinet. Intoxicated with the glories of the war, ministers closed their eyes to every appearance of difficulty, and refused to see, in the surrounding gloom, any indications of distress. Parliament had never had more important duties to perform; yet its meeting had never been postponed to so late a period. The Irish members were unable to come to Westminster, detained by the "pecuniary distress and partial disturbance" which were apparent in Ireland. Yet the Regent was advised to congratulate the legislature on "the flourishing condition" of the "manufactures, commerce, and revenues of the kingdom." The country was anxiously expecting relief, but the ministry was determined to prefer the reduction of debt to the remission of taxation. Neither the distress of the agricultural classes nor the wholesale executions, by which

Attitude of the Ministry

[1] In 1810 gold was quoted at £8, 7*s.* 8*d.* per cent. premium; in 1811 at £20, 2*s.* 7*d.* per cent.; in 1812 at £25, 16*s.* 8*d.* per cent.; in 1813 at £29, 4*s.* 1*d.* per cent. The premium fell in 1814, with the first return of peace, to £14, 7*s.* 7*d*; in 1815 to £13, 9*s.* 6*d.*

Irish discontent was being stamped out, induced them to turn from their settled policy.[1]

The property tax was the most unpopular of the imposts which the war had necessitated. It had been first imposed by Pitt in 1799, after the failure of his plan for trebling the assessed taxes. In its original shape it was a duty of £10 per cent. on all incomes of more than £200 a year, and a graduated duty of a smaller amount on incomes of less than £200 but of more than £60. The tax yielded rather more than £6,000,000 a year, or about £250,000 for every penny. It expired at the peace of Amiens, but it was revived in 1803, after the fresh outbreak of hostilities. In 1803 the tax was collected in a new way. The tenant was compelled to advance the tax for his landlord, the mortgagee for the mortgagor. The new system of collection proved advantageous. A 5 per cent. tax in 1803 proved almost as productive as the old 10 per cent. duty. The necessities of the war, however, compelled the Government to increase its resources. The property tax was doubled by the Talents Administration, and, from 1806 till after the peace, was continued at a 10 per cent. rate. The taxpayers expected that the conclusion of peace would relieve them at once from contributing to an impost which was intolerably heavy. The tax had always been regarded as a war tax; the conclusion of peace seemed the natural and appropriate period for dispensing with it altogether.[2]

The property tax.

The ministry, however, regarded the matter from a very different point of view. The property tax yielded a substantial revenue of £15,000,000 a year; and it required some courage to dispense with a source of income which was so large and so convenient. Ministers had the responsibility of providing for the national expenditure, and it was no easy matter to see how the task could be fulfilled if they were suddenly deprived of the most productive portion of their income. The ex-

[1] Romilly, vol. iii. p. 213. *Hansard*, vol. xxxii. pp. 2, 63. Liverpool, vol. ii. p. 249.

[2] *Report of Commissioners of Inland Revenue*, 1870, vol. i. p. 120; vol. ii. p. 184.

penditure of the year, as it was ultimately approved by Parliament, amounted to no less than £66,581,295.[1] The income of the year, without the property tax, could not be placed at more than £52,365,000. There was, indeed, a surplus of about £6,000,000 in the Exchequer, which was capable of being applied to the service of the year. But, under no circumstances, was it possible to place the available supplies at more than £58,470,000.[2] It was obvious, therefore, that the repeal of the property tax would involve a deficit of more than £8,000,000. Vansittart and his colleagues were not

[1] Debt, Sinking Fund, and Civil List . . . £39,302,000

Army	£10,564,070	
Navy	9,434,440	
Ordnance	1,696,185	
Miscellaneous	2,500,000	
India Debt	945,491	
	£25,140,186	
Deduct Irish charge	3,145,656	
		21,994,530
Unfunded Debt		4,784,765
Silver Coinage		500,000
Total		£66,581,295

—*Hansard*, vol. xxxiv. pp. 827–830.

[2]

Permanent Customs	£3,008,000
Permanent Excise	19,006,000
Assessed Taxes	6,327,000
Stamps	6,107,000
Post Office	1,600,000
Land Tax	1,052,000
Small branches	122,000
Other items	5,743,000
	£42,965,000
War Malt Tax	2,700,000
Land and Malt	3,000,000
Excise	3,500,000
Lotteries	200,000
	£52,365,000
Unapplied surplus, 1815	5,663,775
Unclaimed Dividends	301,316
Money in Exchequer	140,000
Total	£58,470,091

—*Hansard*, vol. xxxiv. p. 830.

prepared to face this deficiency. They were ready to reduce the property tax by one-half, but they were not disposed to dispense with it altogether. As the 10 per cent. property tax yielded £15,000,000, a 5 per cent. tax could be relied on to produce £7,500,000. A sum of £7,500,000 was very nearly the exact amount of the estimated deficit.

The estimates attacked, but agreed to.

At the very outset of the session, then, the ministry found itself opposed to the wishes of the country. It had decided to retain the property tax at half its former rate; the country was bent on dispensing with the tax altogether. The Opposition, in both Houses of Parliament, naturally adopted the views of the country, and insisted on attention being paid to the wishes of the people. There were two ways by which this object could be secured. The tax, in the first place, might be simply abolished, the expenditure, in the next place, might be reduced to a point which would render the continuance of the tax unnecessary. The conclusion of the war, it was urged, ought to be followed by large reductions in the military and naval establishments; and ministers were, on the contrary, contemplating the maintenance of both army and navy on a war footing. They asked for establishments of 33,000 seamen and 149,000 soldiers.[1] The first attacks of the Opposition were made on this establishment. In both Houses of the Legislature the attack was formidable. But the Government had a strong apology for the policy which it was pursuing. It was not easy to prove that any portion of the men, whom it was desired to retain, could be safely spared Twenty-five thousand men were required in Great Britain; 25,000 in Ireland; 23,800 in the old colonies; 22,200 in the new colonies; and 3000 as a reserve for colonial reliefs. The force intended for the new colonies was one-third smaller than that which the powers from whom they had been captured, had maintained in them.

[1] One-third part of this establishment entailed no charge on the British revenues. Thirty thousand men, the Army of Occupation, were paid by France; 20,000 men by the East India Company. The residue, or 99,000 men, were borne on the home establishment.—*Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Hist., pp. 6, 7.

The force intended for the old colonies was only one-third larger than that with which they had been garrisoned in 1791. The force at home only exceeded by 7000 men the numbers which had been thought necessary before the war. The most sanguine economist could, however, hardly pretend that the force which was sufficient in 1791 would be adequate in 1816. Europe had hardly subsided into peace; and, even if peace were preserved, the events of the war had imposed new duties and new responsibilities on Britain. The vast extension of its colonial empire, moreover, made some additions to its home reserves necessary. Arguments of this character formed an irresistible appeal to assemblies of English gentlemen. The Opposition made the greatest efforts to induce the ministry to reduce the establishments. One member complained that the people were being accustomed to military display; another objected to the increased number of sentinels; a third to the employment of troops on levée days. But neither House of Parliament ventured on curtailing the supplies which ministers assured them were necessary. The army and navy estimates were the subject of keen debates, but they were agreed to substantially in their original form [1]

These debates had apparently proved that the strength of the ministry in both Houses was irresistible. It was one thing, however, to obtain the assent of Parliament to a large military establishment; it was another to secure the ways and means for the expenditure which a large military establishment necessitated. A formidable opposition had been already raised to the continuance of the property tax For some weeks before Parliament met Brougham had been carefully preparing for the struggle. Four years before, he had ensured the defeat of the Orders in Council by sedulously encouraging petitions against them from every portion of the kingdom, and by prompting debates upon every petition. An opposition of this character was peculiarly harassing to a ministry. It occupied

The property tax rejected

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Hist., p 10. *Hansard*, vol. xxxiv pp. 482, 1158. Bulwer's *Life of Palmerston*, vol. i. p. 133.

night after night with a merciless repetition of the same arguments; it compelled the supporters of the Government to be in constant attendance to guard against the possibility of a surprise; it consumed hour after hour of public time, which the ministry could with difficulty spare. An opposition of this character is, in fact, so inconvenient that the House of Commons has found it necessary to make it impossible. A member who presents a petition is now only allowed a bare statement of its substance; a debate, therefore, on each petition is no longer admissible. Brougham himself lived to admit that the change, which was thus made, was necessary. But, in the hot ardour with which he was animated in 1816, he never paused to reflect on the consequences of the course which he was pursuing. Petition after petition was presented against the Property Tax Bill; and "six weeks were spent almost entirely in receiving and discussing petitions against the tax." Ministers, at first, met the opposition in silence. But their silence did not check the endless speeches of their opponents; and it deprived the public, both in and out of Parliament, of one side of the argument. It was in vain that Castlereagh complained of the people's ignorant impatience of taxation, or, as he somewhat ludicrously phrased it at the time, of their "ignorant impatience of the relaxation of taxation." Day after day, "at a little after four, the series of debates commenced which lasted until past midnight." On one occasion, after weeks of debate, every occupant of one of the Opposition benches simultaneously rose to speak. On the 18th of March Sir W. Curtis, one of the members for the City of London, moved up the House with a huge petition, signed, as Brougham says, by 12,000, as the Speaker relates by 22,000 persons. Very early on the following morning the Property Tax Bill was thrown out by 238 votes to 201.[1] The burst of cheering which welcomed the decision in the House was taken up by the larger crowd which thronged the lobbies and

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xxxii pp. 934, 1018; vol. xxxiii. p. 451. Brougham, vol. ii. pp. 304, 312. Colchester, vol. ii. p. 570. The Speaker's estimate is confirmed by *Hansard*, vol. xxxiii. p. 409.

the avenues to the assembly. Twenty-six years passed before another British minister, with new surroundings and in new circumstances, ventured to revive the obnoxious impost.

The rejection of the property tax deprived the ministry at one blow of £7,500,000 a year; but its rejection formed only one portion of the embarrassments of the Government. Lord Liverpool and his colleagues had been forced to see their weakness, and their recent defeat diminished their confidence of carrying their other proposals. Notwithstanding the congratulations which they had inserted in the Regent's message, they could no longer close their eyes to the general distress. The distress was not probably greater in the agricultural than in the manufacturing districts; but the distress of the agriculturists was much more serious to the ministry. Parliament was a Parliament of landlords and their representatives; and the landed interest had, therefore, special means of forcing their grievances on the Cabinet. Their distress was certainly serious. Wheat, which during the war had frequently sold for 120*s.* a quarter, was only worth 52*s.* 6*d.* in the commencement of 1816.[1] Nearly a fortnight before the property tax was rejected, Western, the member for Essex, moved for a committee of the whole House to take into consideration the distressed state of the agriculture of the United Kingdom.[2] Western proposed fourteen resolutions declaratory of the distress, and suggesting a reduction of the malt tax and a further restriction on the foreign trade in corn.[3] The debate on Western's resolutions was adjourned; and, before it was again resumed, the defeat on the property tax induced the ministry partially to give way. The duty on malt had been fixed at 2*s.* 5*d.*[4] a bushel in 1803. It had been raised to 4*s.* 5¾*d.* a bushel in 1804. It had remained at that rate till after the conclusion of the war. The additional 2*s.*, imposed in 1804, was commonly known as the "war malt tax;" and this addition the ministry determined to surrender. "In

The war malt tax.

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Chron., p. 353. [2] *Hansard*, vol. xxxiii. p. 31.
[3] Ibid., p. 55.
[4] This was the English rate. The rates varied slightly in Scotland and Ireland.

consequence of the decision on the income tax," said Vansittart, "it would be necessary to have recourse to the money market, and it was of little consequence that the amount should be increased by the amount of the calculated produce of the war duty." The surrender of the war malt tax—the matter of little consequence—involved a loss of £2,700,000 a year. The defeat of the property tax and the surrender of the war malt duty deprived the Government of ways and means amounting to at least £10,000,000 a year.[1]

Weakness of the Ministry

The wholesale abandonment of taxation, which the weakness of the ministry made necessary, compelled the Cabinet to reconsider the financial arrangements. The Opposition was clamorous for economy, and fastened, as all economists are apt to fasten, on small extravagances, possibly objectionable in themselves, but involving only a slight outlay. The Regent was spending money on alterations in the Pavilion at Brighton and on a cottage in Windsor Park. A serious attack was made on him in Parliament for this reason. The salary of a vice-treasurer was cut down from £3500 to £2000. A proposal to raise the salaries of the secretaries to the Admiralty from £3000 to £4000 a year was only carried by a majority of 29;[2] and would possibly have not been carried at all, if Brougham had not estranged some of his own friends by an unprovoked and irrelevant attack on the Regent. Ministers were so shaken by these divisions that Lord Liverpool officially assured the Regent "that their existence hanged by a thread." From such a prince it must have been poor comfort to receive the assurance that his Royal Highness was still "true to the backbone."[3]

The support of the Regent, however, weak as it was, enabled ministers to cling to office; but it became obviously necessary for them to reconstruct their whole fiscal policy. They had to face a deficit of more than £10,000,000; and

[1] *Report of Commrs. of Inland Rev.*, 1870, vol. i. p. 30, vol. ii. p. 16. Miss Martineau's *Thirty Years' Peace*, vol. i. p. 21. *Hansard*, vol. xxxii. pp. 457–471. [2] *Hansard*, vol. xxxii. p 513.

[3] Romilly, vol. iii. p. 236. Colchester, vol. ii. p. 571. Liverpool, vol. ii. pp. 270, 271.

such a deficiency would have tested the ingenuity of any financier. The deficit indeed might have been converted into a surplus by a single stroke of the pen. Nearly £15,000,000 of the expenditure arose from the existence of a Sinking Fund,[1] and the termination or even temporary suspension of the Sinking Fund would, therefore, have solved all the difficulties of the ministry. So simple a plan would, perhaps, have hardly satisfied the susceptibilities of the country, or have occurred to so plain a plodder as Vansittart, the finance minister. In place of it the Government decided on borrowing £11,500,000—£9,000,000 from the Bank, and £2,500,000 by the issue of Exchequer Bills.[2]

Reconstruction of financial arrangements.

While Parliament was making these various arrangements for the future the condition of the country was becoming more and more critical. The fall in the price of corn at the close of 1815 deprived the farmers of all probability of profit; and farms in every part of the kingdom were thrown out of cultivation. Early in 1816 the Board of Agriculture issued questions to 326 persons with a view to testing the condition of agriculture in different parts of the country In 168 of the replies cases were mentioned in which farms were unoccupied. In 37 of the replies it was stated that all the farmers who could have given notice to quit. In 103 of the replies it was stated that many of the farmers, and in 111 of them that several or a few of the farmers, had given notice to quit. 212 of the replies spoke of a reduction of rents. The average of these reductions amounted to 25 per cent.; and, placing the gross rent of land at £36,000,000 a year, the Board of Agriculture inferred that the loss occasioned by the distress, to landlords alone, amounted to no less than £9,000,000 a year.[3] But the land-

Critical state of the country

[1] By the Sinking Fund £11,500,000
By repayment of Exchequer Bills 1,500,000
By Debentures and Loyalty Loan 1,024,000
By East India Debt 945,000
£14,969,000

[2] *Hansard*, vol. xxxiv. pp. 820–856

[3] The report will be found in *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Chron., p. 459.

owners represented only one portion of the sufferers, and the class which was perhaps able to bear the suffering more easily than any other. Far more serious was the distress which was everywhere felt by the agricultural and the manufacturing poor. Everything conspired to reduce the value of labour. "English goods were selling for much less in Holland and in the North of Europe than in London or Manchester."[1] Manufacturing operations were consequently paralysed. Agricultural produce was suddenly reduced to half its former value; and agricultural operations were suspended in many parts of the kingdom. Labour everywhere failed to obtain remunerative employment; and at this very moment a large addition was made to the number of labourers. The navy was reduced from 100,000 men in 1815 to 33,000 in 1816 The militia was disbanded, and the establishment of the regular army largely contracted. At a time when the supply of workmen was already in excess some 200,000 able-bodied men were added to the crowd of labourers seeking employment.[2] The hopes which the peace had raised were suddenly turned into the most bitter disappointment.

The distress was visible in every class of life "Every avenue," wrote Scott to his brother, "is now choked with applicants, whose claims are very strong; for the number of disbanded officers and public servants dismissed, in consequence of Parliament turning restive and refusing the income tax, is great and increasing Economy is the order of the day, and I can assure you they are shaving pretty close.[3] "The number of bankruptcies," said Brougham in the House of Commons, "is daily increasing;" the home trade is at a standstill; the landlord receives no rent; the tenant can sell no corn "Upon two estates in Norfolk," said the Duke of Bedford in the House of Lords, "lands in one instance of 5000 acres, in another of 3000 acres, were offered to tenants rent-free if they would cultivate them, but none would take them." "Distress," said another member, "pervaded every branch of commerce."[4]

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xxxiii. p. 1098. [2] Alison, vol. i. p. 109.
[3] Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 331.
[4] *Hansard*, vol. xxxii. pp. 38, 67, and vol. xxxiii. p. 162.

Nothing seemed wanting to complete the universal misery, but the cup of suffering was to be filled more fully. If work was scarce bread was cheap; and, in the cheapness of their chief article of food, the labouring classes found moderate consolation. A wet and chilly spring threatened, however, to deprive them of this advantage. The harvest seemed imperilled by the rains, and corn rose in value. Wheat, at the end of April, touched 80*s.* a quarter, and the old prices seemed on the eve of returning. Farms, which had been thrown out of cultivation, were re-let; the incoming tenants mistaking the rise of prices, which was due to the first threatenings of dearth, for the rise of prices which had been created by the excessive demands of the war. Their hopes were speedily destroyed. "The rain it raineth every day" was the universal refrain in the summer of 1816. "As for spring," wrote Scott to Morritt, "that is past praying for. In the month of November last, people were skating in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh; and now, in the middle of May, the snow is lying white on Arthur's Seat and on the range of the Pentlands. It is really fearful, and the sheep are perishing by scores. Jam satis terræ nivis, &c, may still be taken up as the song of eighteen hundred and sixteen."[1] Rain and cold were not confined to this country. News arrived from every part of Europe, excepting Russia, of disastrous inundations; and the weather was, at least, as severe in this country as in any part of the Continent. Some idea of its exceptional nature may be inferred from the fact, that a severe frost in September killed all the vegetables in the neighbourhood of Ely.[2] The harvest everywhere failed. No single industry, except that of the fisherman, prospered; the price of wheat rapidly rose, till in December it averaged nearly double the sum at which it had been quoted in January. Even the turf in Ireland was spoiled by the heavy rains; and the Irish experienced not merely a want of food, but a want of fuel. Never during the whole of the war had Britain experi-

The harvest fails.

[1] Lockhart's *Scott*, p 331.

[2] *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Chron., pp. 83, 94, 101, 102, 106, 114, 136.

enced such suffering as she felt, after the first conclusion of peace, from the combined influences of bad weather, superabundant labour, and dear bread.

Universal distress.

The distress, in the higher classes of society, necessitated the most careful economies. Luxuries were disused; and works of art, which a few months before had been regarded as priceless treasures, were disposed of for less than a tenth of their value. Two Claudes, which had been bought three years previously for a thousand guineas each, were sold by auction in April 1816 for seventy and eighty guineas respectively.[1] It would, however, have been happy for the country if such effects as these had been the only results of the bad weather. Far more serious was the want among the poor. "In Radnorshire and Herefordshire," wrote Romilly, "the prospect is extremely alarming. There must be a very great scarcity of wheat and barley. The potatoes, too, which form so large a part of the food of the poor, have greatly failed; and, to add to their distress, the long continuance of rain has prevented them from getting peat from the moors, and laying in their usual stock of winter fuel." "The distress in Yorkshire," wrote Lord Darlington to Lord Sidmouth, "was unprecedented, there was a total stagnation of the little trade they had; wheat was already more than a guinea a bushel, and no old corn in store; the potato crop had failed; the harvest (October 8) was only beginning, the corn in many parts being still green; and he feared a total defalcation of all grain that season from the deluge of rain, which had fallen for many weeks, and was still falling."[2] But the distress, which Romilly witnessed in a tour in Wales, and which Lord Darlington saw around him in his own neighbourhood, was universal. "Our wheat is good for nothing," wrote Lord Eldon from Dorsetshire, "as a farmer I am ruined here and in Durham. So much for peace and plenty."[3] Distress rapidly led to disturbances. Riots were reported from every part of England. At Bideford the mob

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Chron., pp. 54. Liverpool, vol. ii. p. 280.
[2] Romilly, vol. ii. p. 264. Sidmouth, vol. iii. p 150. [3] Ibid., p. 151.

interfered to prevent the export of a cargo of potatoes, at Bridport the people paraded the streets, broke into the bakers' shops, and proceeded to other acts of violence. Fires, kindled by incendiaries, broke out night after night in the Eastern counties. The pitmen of Newcastle declined to continue working at their existing wages; and a reduction in the rate of wages led to serious breaches of the peace in Lancashire. "I look to the winter with fear and trembling," wrote the Chancellor. Stout-hearted as Lord Eldon was, he had good cause for his apprehensions.[1] Riots.

The condition of the agricultural counties was, for the moment, the most serious. It was incidentally stated in the House of Commons that, in one parish of Dorsetshire, 419 out of 575 inhabitants were in the receipt of relief. At Swanage six people out of every seven were paupers, and the poor rate amounted to £1, 1*s* in the pound.[2] Every individual but one in a parish in Cambridgeshire was either a bankrupt or a pauper Strong able-bodied men in Essex were often only able to earn "but 6*d*. a day," and wheat was at from £4 to £5 a quarter. Riots, in such circumstances, were almost inevitable; and, though the conduct of the people was inexcusable and unwise, the frenzy of despair may explain the outrages into which they were driven The mob concluded that the price of bread was the result of a conspiracy among the farmers. They revenged themselves on their supposed enemies by burning agricultural produce. In the second week of May a cattle shed at Hadleigh was set on fire, on the same night a barn at Woodbridge was destroyed. The example, which was thus set, was soon imitated in other parts of the Eastern counties. Farm buildings, barns, stacks, machinery, business premises, were set on fire; and all agricultural property seemed insecure, and liable to destruction by incendiaries. The newspapers during the month of May recorded fires of this character at Bungay, at Haverhill, at Wickham Brook, at Clare, at Henham, and at many other places in Suffolk; and

[1] *Ann. Reg*., 1816, Chron., pp. 60, 68, 73, 127. Sidmouth, vol. iii. p. 151.
[2] *Hansard*, vol xxxiii. p. 1082, and vol xxxv p. 907.

great alarm was naturally created at their frequent recurrence. These outrages were, however, only indications of the disturbances which were to follow. In the middle of May a mob of 1500 men assembled at Brandon, insisted that wheat should be sold for *2s. 6d.* a bushel, and that the price of beef should be fixed at fourpence a pound. Annoyed at a refusal, they levelled a butcher's shop to the ground, and attacked the houses of other obnoxious tradesmen. Similar riotous proceedings occurred at Norwich, at Bury, at Cambridge, at Ely, at Littleport, and at other places in the Eastern counties. Nothing but the interposition of the military ended the tumult. The troops had to proceed to the extreme measure of firing upon the rioters before the disturbances were quelled.[1]

The ministry thought it necessary to mark its sense of the importance of the riots by resorting to extraordinary precautions

Trial of the rioters.

A special commission was sent down to Ely for the trial of the rioters of Littleport and Ely. Seventy-three of these unhappy individuals had been arrested by the exertions of the troops. There was no doubt whatever that the disturbances which they had occasioned had been of an alarming character. The house of a Mr. Vachel, a clergyman and magistrate, had been broken into and demolished, large sums of money had been extorted from the inhabitants of Ely, one of the soldiers sent to restore order had been severely wounded, and for forty-eight hours the entire district had been at the mercy of the mob. A severe example was necessary; and men were in office who were not likely to shrink from severe punishments. Thirty-four of the prisoners were condemned to death; five were actually executed. The disturbances were quelled by these rigid measures. The district sank into a torpor of despair [2]

The distress of the agriculturists attracted the chief attention in the early part of 1816; yet other workmen suffered equal privations. The price of iron fell from £20 to £8 a ton; and the most serious distress resulted, in consequence, both in the iron trade itself and in the coal trade, which is dependent on the demand for iron. It

Distress in the coal and iron trades

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Chron., pp. 61, 65, 67, 71, 73. [2] Ibid., pp. 79, 90.

was stated, at the end of August, that out of thirty-four furnaces in Shropshire, each employing on an average 300 men, twenty-four were out of blast. Orders had been given for the discontinuance of work at two out of the remaining ten. The works which were thus extinguished had ordinarily consumed 8000 tons of coal a week; so that their stoppage involved not merely the forced idleness of 7200 puddlers, but the non-employment of a corresponding number of colliers. The distress in the neighbouring county of Stafford was even more pitiful. The manufacturing poor were literally starving. Men were compelled to eat the cabbage-stalks in their cottage gardens; and the parochial authorities, over-burdened with the sudden load thrown upon them, were unable to provide either food or employment for the multitudes who required relief. 27,500 persons out of a population of 84,000 were in receipt of relief in Birmingham.[1] In the middle of July the colliers devised a curious method for obtaining assistance. They harnessed themselves to loaded waggons of coal, and drew them through the country The men of Bilston marched with three waggons by different roads on London. Wolverhampton sent a waggon through Chester to Liverpool, and other parties started with similar loads in other directions. The men do not seem to have been disorderly, they everywhere displayed the strongest anxiety to keep within the law; and the steadiness of their conduct increased the compassion which was generally felt for them The authorities acted with creditable despatch and commendable humanity. Lord Sidmouth quietly ordered competent persons to meet the parties who were marching on London, to purchase their coals and to send them home again. The magistrates in other parts of the kingdom imitated Lord Sidmouth's example; and the colliers were induced to return home quietly. A still more serious demonstration which resulted from the depression of the iron trade in South Wales was suppressed with equal ease. Wages in the iron trade were already low; and a further

[1] Brougham, in the House of Commons, 13th March 1817 *Hansard*, vol. xxxv p. 1008 *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Chron , p. 131.

reduction in their rate drove the men to desperate measures. The men of Newport suddenly left their work and marched on Merthyr; they were joined on the march by the workmen from Tredegar and Sirhowy. They stopped the blast at Dowlais, at Merthyr, at Ebbw Vale, at Llanelly, and struck thence across the mountains to Crumlin, Newbridge, and Abercarne. The troops were in the meanwhile collecting at Newport. Detachments were hurried up to various places, and the mob, which had increased to 10,000 or 12,000 men, gradually dispersed. The men were induced to return to labour on their miserable wages, and work was generally resumed.[1]

Machinery.

The disturbances which thus took place were not confined to the agricultural and mining districts. Five years previously a sudden paralysis of trade had inflicted considerable injury on the manufacturing interest, and the manufacturing poor, condemned to forced idleness, had avenged themselves by destroying the machinery, to which they had attributed their want of work. The riots which had then broken out were known as the Luddite riots. The name, which was thus applied to them, had a curious origin. More than thirty years before there lived in a village in Leicestershire one Ned Ludd, a man of weak intellect, the village butt, Irritated by his tormentors, the unhappy fellow one day pursued one of them into an adjoining house. He could not find the lad who had been mocking him; but in his fury he broke a couple of stocking frames which were on the premises. When frames were afterwards broken it was the common saying that Ludd had broken them; and thus Ned Ludd, the village idiot, gave a name to one of the most formidable series of riots of the present century.[2] Machinery, in the early years of the century, it must be remembered, was regarded with very different feelings from those with which it is contemplated now. The first jury trial in Scotland took place early in 1816, and related to a steam-engine, which had recently been erected for grinding flour near Edinburgh, and which the neighbours desired to

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Chron., pp. 95, 110, 165–167. Sidmouth, vol. iii. p. 153.
[2] See Sidmouth, vol. iii. p. 80, note.

suppress as a nuisance. The jury, who were a little more sensible than the rest of their townsfolk, decided that "the engine was useful, and not offensive;" so the machine was still permitted to go on grinding. But the mere fact that such an action could have been tried in 1816 explains the resentment felt by uneducated working men at the introduction of machinery which they fancied was depriving them of their bread. A working man in Ireland was fined £5 by his fellow-workmen for presuming to work at a machine called a "gig mill."[1] In July the leader of a party of Luddites, which had broken every lace machine in Loughborough, openly declared his readiness to march any distance, even one or two hundred miles, to break any machine which was working under price. In October a large number of persons, commanded, it was said, by "General Ludd" himself, broke thirty machines in Nottinghamshire because the frames were making a kind of lace which, in the opinion of the frame makers, did not afford remunerative employment to the workmen. The domestic history of 1816 is, in fact, little more than a long catalogue of social disturbances. In every part of the country, in Edinburgh, in Glasgow, in Northumberland, in Lancashire, in Leicestershire, in the Black Country, in Wales, in the Eastern counties, in the mines of Cornwall, and the pleasant fields of Devonshire rioting broke out. "On Monday, the 28th of October," Sidmouth wrote to his brother-in-law, "there was a serious riot at Birmingham, and, though quelled at the time with the assistance of the military, it was expected to recur. The neighbourhood of Manchester was very bad, and Nottingham hopeless." "The lower orders," reported Nadin, the chief police officer of Manchester, "are everywhere meeting in large bodies, and are very clamorous. Delegates from all quarters are moving about amongst them, as they were before the last disturbance, and they talk of a general union of the lower orders throughout the kingdom."[2] Labour was engaged in one universal revolt against the conditions of its employment.[3]

[1] *Ann Reg.*, 1816, Chron., pp. 5, 12. [2] Sidmouth, vol. iii. pp. 156, 165.
[3] *Ann. Reg.*, 1816, Chron., pp. 5, 67, 100, 116, 161.

Distress engendered discontent; discontent promoted disturbance; a period of disturbance afforded an opportunity for political agitators. During the preceding years a knot of comparatively obscure persons had been busily propagating some new political principles. Either from the recollection of a famous speech, in which Fox in 1797 had insisted on the necessity for radical reform, or from the violence of their own principles, they had taken the name of Radicals. The word "Radical," however, conveyed a very different meaning in 1816 to what it does now. Sidmouth gravely wrote of the Radicals as "the enemy"[1] The hands of the Radicals were supposed to be against every man, and every man's hand was against them. Wherever there was a serious disturbance the rioters were usually branded as Radicals, and Radical and rioter became almost synonymous terms. Scott, when he talks of rebels in arms, always styles them Radicals[2] Radicalism is "a spirit," wrote the vicar of Harrow in 1820, "of which the first elements are a rejection of Scripture, and a contempt of all the institutions of your country, and of which the results, unless averted by a merciful Providence, must be anarchy, atheism, and universal ruin."[3] Few men would doubt now that Brougham began life as a Radical. "The Radicals," he wrote in 1819, "have made themselves so odious that a number even of our own way of thinking would be well enough pleased to see them and their vile press put down at all hazards." It is impossible to understand the history of 1816 without appreciating the sense in which the word "Radical" was used at that time.

The Radicals.

The leader of the Radicals was the once well-known "Orator" Hunt. "Hunt," wrote Romilly, "was the friend of Cobbett, and a friend worthy of him—that is, a most un-

[1] Sidmouth, vol. iii. p. 276.

[2] Lockhart's *Scott*, pp. 412, 415, 430. *Ann. Reg.*, 1820, Chron., pp. 104, 119, 126. Knight, in the first book of Miss Martineau's *Hist. of the Thirty Years' Peace*, p 226, says that the Reformers were first called Radicals in 1819. The statement is erroneous. See, for instance, *Hansard*, vol. xxxvi. p. 761, where J. W. Ward, speaking in 1817, uses the expression and defines it.

[3] Ibid., p. 418.

principled demagogue."[1] Hunt was a gentleman of some property in Somersetshire, and was a liveryman of London.[2] He had gained some little political notoriety by standing for Bristol at the general election of 1812, and he had distinguished himself on that occasion by a merciless abuse of almost every leading public man. But Hunt, though he aspired to the lead of the Radical mob, was in reality in the hands of the wildest agitators. At the close of 1816 a small body of obscure men, lodging in different places in London, were devising the most extraordinary plots against the Government. Among them was Thistlewood, whose desperate designs subsequently won for him an unenviable notoriety, Watson, "with a better heart than head,"[3] an indigent member of the medical profession; Watson's son; Preston; Hooper, Castle, and one or two others. These men persuaded themselves that it was a very easy matter to subvert the Government, and to establish a Committee of Public Safety. They proposed—if the evidence of Castle can be relied on—to fire the barracks, to march on the Tower, and to trust to fortune or Providence for the success of their scheme. With the view of carrying out this notable plan they actually obtained some 250 pikeheads; they attempted to hire a vacant house near one of the barracks; and they treated any soldiers with whom they happened to be thrown into contact with gallons of beer. Even these miserable details rested on the evidence of Castle; and Castle was one of the most contemptible witnesses that had ever appeared in a court of justice. He had been charged, some years before, with uttering forged notes, and had saved himself by turning informer. The man against whom he had appeared on that occasion had been hanged. The same thing had occurred on another occasion: Castle had turned informer, one of his gang had been hanged, and a second transported. He had since that time been living in a disreputable house in King Street, Soho. He had now turned informer again.

The Radical leader.

[1] Romilly, vol. iii. p. 55. [2] *Ann. Reg.*, 1820, Chron., p. 877.
[3] Bamford, vol. i. p. 24

Such was the man on whose evidence the theory of an insurrection against the Government mainly rested. If his story were true, the most powerful constitution in the world was to be overturned by some half dozen desperate conspirators. The more formidable features of the design were, however, soon abandoned. The conspirators made up their mind that it was no easy matter to fire the barracks, and devoted their energies to the convening of a large meeting. A placard was issued calling "a meeting of the distressed manufacturers, artisans, and others of the Cities of London and Westminster, the Borough of Southwark, and parts adjacent, in Spa Fields, on Friday, the 15th of November, at 12 o'clock, to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning the Prince Regent and the legislature to adopt immediately such means as will relieve the sufferers from the misery which now overwhelms them."[1] The meeting was held. Inflammatory speeches were made at it; and an adjournment was agreed on to the 2nd of December, ostensibly to receive the Regent's answer to the petition. A new placard was prepared for the adjourned meeting. The placard was headed, "England expects every man to do his duty." It stated that the meeting was held to receive the Regent's answer, and for other important considerations; and it went on to describe

The Spa Fields riot.

> The present state of Great Britain.
> Four millions in distress!!!
> Four millions embarrassed!!!
> One million and a half fear distress!!!
> Half a million live in splendid luxury!!!
> Our brothers in Ireland are in a worse state
> The climax of misery is complete—it can go no farther.
> Death would now be a relief to millions.[2]

Hunt, who had been the principal speaker on the 15th of November, was again expected to take a prominent part in the proceedings. But Hunt had probably a shrewd anticipation that the meeting was likely to lead to a riot, and was late.

[1] *State Trials*, vol. xxxii. p. 68. [2] Ibid., p 86.

The meeting had been announced for twelve o'clock. Hunt chose to think that "one o'clock was the time," and at twenty minutes to one was quietly driving along Cheapside.[1] In the meanwhile Watson, Thistlewood, and their friends had proceeded to Spa Fields. A waggon which had been placed in the centre of the Fields was used as a platform. The elder Watson mounted the waggon and made an inflammatory address to the crowd. "Are we to go on," he asked, "from time to time, from month to month, from year to year, calling to the Father of his people, as he is called, in vain for redress?" (Cries of "No! no!") "The present, then, is the time to do something." Watson the elder was succeeded by Watson the younger. The younger Watson's politics were more drastic than his father's. "If they will not give us what we want," he asked, "shall we not take it?" ("Yes.") "Are you willing to take it?" ("Yes.") "If I jump down among you will you follow me?" (The crowd answered, with loud acclamations, "Yes! yes!") Watson, thus encouraged, seized a tricoloured flag which had been placed in the waggon and jumped down. His father and his other associates attended him; and the mob, surging round him, followed him through Clerkenwell and Smithfield to Snow Hill. Here they seized all the firearms in a gunsmith's shop, shot at and severely wounded a gentleman who had the temerity to remonstrate with them; and continued their march through Cheapside to the Exchange. The Lord Mayor had the prudence to collect a strong party of police at this point, and succeeded in arresting three of the most prominent rioters The mob, foiled by the firm front which the Lord Mayor continued to oppose to them, filed off from the Exchange and moved into the Minories. Troops, however, were now gradually collecting from different parts of the metropolis. The rioters saw that it was impossible to accomplish anything further, and began to disperse. Petty acts of mischief were committed by detached parties; but the tranquillity of the metropolis was secured before

[1] *State Trials*, vol xxxii. p. 304. Cf. Hunt's own account. *Hansard*, vol. xxxv. pp. 547–551.

the close of the short December day which had witnessed the outbreak of the riot.[1]

There was no doubt that a serious riot had occurred in the metropolis, and that its ringleaders thoroughly deserved punishment. Some time, however, elapsed before the more formidable among them were arrested, and it was not till the following June that they were placed on their trial. The ministry should have obviously indicted them for an aggravated riot; it made the mistake of dignifying their obscure proceedings by charging them with high treason. The jury declined to convict Watson, whose trial came on first, of an offence, to which the law still attached a brutal punishment,[2] and the Attorney-General thereupon refused to proceed against the other prisoners. The folly of the ministry, in charging the culprits with an exaggerated offence, saved the prisoners from the punishment which they thoroughly deserved.[3]

While Watson and his associates had been rioting in the City, Hunt had at last arrived in Spa Fields. The meeting, which he addressed, resolved on a second adjournment, to "the second Monday after the meeting of Parliament, viz, the 10th of February," and in the meanwhile to organise the country by the formation of secret societies in every part of it.

Secret societies.

It was the object of these societies to obtain annual Parliaments, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, abolition of all property qualifications for members of Parliament, and paid representatives of the people in the House of Commons. Such societies[4] were formed in the neighbour-

[1] A full account of the Spa Fields riot will be found in *State Trials*, vol. xxxii. pp. 1–674. Castle's evidence—which is the most important portion of the case—occupies from p. 214 to 329. See also *Ann Reg.*, 1816, Chron, p. 190, *Hansard*, vol xxxv. pp 411–419.

[2] The punishment for high treason was altered in 1814. But the traitor was still liable to be drawn on a hurdle to the place of execution, to be hanged till he was dead; to have his head severed from his body, and his body divided into four quarters, to be disposed of as the king should direct. The Crown had power to dispense with the drawing of the body on a hurdle. On the other hand, there was power reserved to order the decapitation to take place before the hanged man was dead. 54 Geo. III. 146.

[3] *Ann Reg.*, 1817, Hist., p. 102, and Chron, p. 49. Romilly, vol. iii. p. 297.

[4] The most famous of these societies were the Spencean Clubs, the Hampden

hood of "Leicester, Loughborough, Nottingham, Mansfield, Derby, Chesterfield, Sheffield, Blackburn, Manchester, Birmingham, and Glasgow."[1] "But," added the Secret Committee of 1817, "they extend and are spreading in some parts of the country to every village." The upper classes were seriously alarmed by the preparations which they saw around them. "The lower orders," wrote Nadin, the chief constable of Manchester, "are everywhere meeting in large bodies, and are very clamorous" "The manufacturing populace," wrote Southey from his lonely retreat in the lake country, "are not merely discontented with the Government, but absolutely abhor it with a deadly hatred."[2] "A very wide and extensive plan of insurrection has been formed," wrote the Duke of Northumberland, "which might possibly have been acted upon before this time but for the proper precautions taken to prevent it."[3]

Nadin and the Duke of Northumberland gave expression to the alarm which was everywhere felt. And the alarm was increased by an unfortunate circumstance. The Regent, on his return from opening Parliament, was grossly insulted Stones were thrown at his carriage, and one of its windows was broken, either by a stone or, as was believed at the time,

Clubs, and the Union Clubs. The Spenceans derived their name from one Spence, a Yorkshire schoolmaster, who desired to make all the land of the country the property of the State, and to divide all the produce for the support of the people The Hampden Club in London was founded in 1811, by Mr. Northmore, a gentleman residing in Devonshire, for the purpose of promoting Parliamentary reform and the freedom of election. It had a very feeble existence, and died a natural death in 1819. The London Union was founded in 1812 Both the Hampden Clubs and the Union Clubs seem to have been very harmless organisations. The former included among its members the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Byron, Lord Oxford, Mr Ducane of Braxted, Mr Fawkes of Farnley, Mr. Hodges of Hemsted, Mr Rashleigh of Prideaux, and many other large landed proprietors. A good deal will be found about these clubs in the *Life of Major Cartwright*, the "father of Reform." See especially vol ii. pp. 24, 129, 163, 178, 184, 377, 388 Cf. also *Hansard*, vol. xxxv. pp. 443, 473, 531, *State Trials*, vol xxxii. p 32, and *Hist of the Thirty Years' Peace*, vol. i. p 50.

[1] *Ann. Reg*, 1817, Hist., p 6. *Hansard*, vol. xxxv. pp. 411–419 Alison's *Castlereagh*, vol iii p 37.

[2] Liverpool, vol. ii. p. 298.

[3] Sidmouth, vol. iii. pp. 165, 177

by a bullet from an air-gun. Nothing could have been more unfortunate for the country than this occurrence. The upper classes were already incensed against the Radicals; and the outrage on the Regent, exaggerated into an attack on his life, increased their resentment. Extreme measures were loudly called for; and discontent, which had been partly fomented by harsh and unequal legislation, was made the excuse for legislation still harsher and more unequal.

Yet there was nothing in the circumstances of the country in 1817 to justify arbitrary measures. The law as it stood had proved adequate to the repression of every tumult. The riots in Cambridgeshire had been quelled; the coal districts were settling into tranquillity; the outrages which had disgraced he metropolis had ended as suddenly as they had begun; the value of corn had reached its maximum, and there was reason to believe that prices were beginning to fall. The ministry consequently would have done wisely to have leaned to the side of leniency, and to have abstained from asking for fresh measures of repression. Unfortunately, Lord Liverpool, Lord Castlereagh, and Lord Sidmouth adopted a different policy. They saw in every attempt at riot fresh reason for new penal laws, and, while they were smothering the flame with fresh fuel, fancied that they had extinguished it

The policy of the Ministry

The first step which the ministry took was to refer to secret committees of both Houses of Parliament papers "respecting certain practices, meetings, and combinations in the metropolis and different parts of the kingdom, evidently calculated to endanger the public tranquillity, to alienate the affections of his Majesty's subjects from his Majesty's person and government, and to bring into hatred and contempt the whole system of our laws and constitution."[1] The committees in both Houses agreed on nearly identical reports. Their purport has already been partly stated. A general insurrection, the subversion of the Government, a general plunder of property were, in the opinion of the Lords'

Secret committees.

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xxxv. p. 173.

committee, the immediate objects of the Reformers. Secret societies, it was added, with branches affiliated to them, were organising the country. Seditious and inflammatory publications were disseminated among the people. Arms were, in certain cases, provided by a few desperate men; and their possessors probably contemplated the possibility of riot and disorder. There was no doubt that the committees were satisfied as to the gravity of the situation. There is no reason to impeach their good faith; but it is legitimate to question their infallibility: for it is certain that they described the objects of the societies in exaggerated language, and when men are convicted of using hyperbole in one case, there is always *primâ facie* ground for thinking that they may be guilty of other exaggerations. The Lords' committee, for instance, thought that the Union Clubs were contemplating the subversion of the constitution. But, they declared the subversion of the constitution which the secret societies were meditating to be the enactment of universal suffrage and of annual Parliaments. The same committee reported that the Spencean philanthropists were aiming at the reform of the land laws by the institution of a parochial partnership in land; that they argued that the land was the people's farm, that landed monopoly was contrary to the spirit of Christianity, and destructive of the independence and morality of mankind. These objects and opinions may have been foolish and impracticable, but they did not deserve the language in which the committees of both Houses spoke of them. It is true that the committees added that these objects were to be attained by violence and insurrection. But, with the exception of the circumstances connected with the Spa Fields riot, neither committee placed its finger on a single definite act which proved their statement. The leaders of the Spa Fields riot were tried at the bar of the King's Bench for treason, and the jury refused to convict them. Their acquittal casts, to say the least, a doubt on the justice of the reports made by the secret committees of both Houses.[1]

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xxxv. pp. 411, 438–447.

Viewed in the light of opinion, openly advocated a little more than half a century afterwards, the ideas which were agitating clubs and societies do not seem very formidable. No ministry would now venture to declare the country on the brink of a Revolution, because some obscure agitators were demanding the institution of universal suffrage, or the resumption of the land of the nation by the State. In 1817, however, men's minds were still haunted by the recollection of Revolutionary excesses in France; and were unable to distinguish between Reform and Revolution. The legislation, which immediately followed, was introduced on the responsibility of the ministry. But the proposals, which Government made, had the support of the governing classes Even Lord Grenville, who had been the head of the Talents Administration, and who was, in one sense, the leader of the loose and disorganised Opposition, was in favour of coercion. Lord Grenville's opinions might perhaps have been expected. A man, who had held the seals of the Home Office during Pitt's later administration, could hardly have been expected to oppose repressive measures. The attitude of Lord Grenville, however, made the Opposition powerless. They could not hope to succeed in resisting measures declared necessary by their own leader.

On its part the ministry lost no time. On the 21st of February Sidmouth introduced into the House of Lords a bill for the temporary suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. On the 24th of February Castlereagh, in the House of Commons, introduced three other bills; one to prevent seditious meetings and assemblies; another to perpetuate and to extend to the Regent an act for the safety and preservation of his Majesty's person; and a third "for the better prevention and punishment of all attempts to seduce persons serving." The ministry succeeded in carrying all these measures; the Opposition was even powerless to obtain their amendment. Mackintosh was unable to persuade the House to substitute transportation for death as the punishment for the refusal of a seditious meeting to disperse;

Repressive measures in Great Britain.

and the eloquent appeal, in which a younger man than Mackintosh besought the members of the House to imitate the courage of their ancestors, was equally ineffective. The reports of the secret committees had done their work: the powers which the Government demanded were granted by large majorities, and the bills became law.[1]

No ministry since that of Lord Liverpool, no Parliament since that of 1817, has ventured to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act in Great Britain. A far more serious danger than the Spa Fields meeting has occurred since that time, a far more formidable organisation than that of the Radicals has been arrayed against the British Government. Yet the ministry of 1848 and the two ministries of 1866 faced the Chartist riots and overcame the Fenian insurrection without suspending the Habeas Corpus Act in Great Britain for a day. The suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1817 was, however, hardly less defensible than the Act for the suppression of seditious meetings. What were the circumstances under which it was proposed? The organisers of the Radicals had discovered that, by adjourning a meeting legally convened, they could practically evade the law which required each meeting to be summoned on the requisition of seven householders, and could thus keep up a continual agitation against the Government. It requires an effort to believe that these continually adjourned meetings constituted dangers which it was desirable to repress by exceptional legislation. But, even if adjourned meetings were dangerous, the Seditious Meetings Bill went far beyond the requirements to which it pointed. It was the deliberate object of the bill to prevent the existence of debating societies, lecture-rooms, and reading-rooms. The ministry even declined to exempt lectures in medicine, surgery, and chemistry from its operation. No debating society could sit, no lecture could be given, without the leave of the licensing magistrates. Some of the licensing magistrates, at any rate, were animated in administering the law by the narrowest

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xxxv. pp. 491, 551, 639, 795, 822, 931–946. *Ann. Reg.*, 1817, Hist., pp. 23, 24.

views. One of the aldermen of London, in resisting the grant of a license to the Academical Society, declared that it was "the purpose of the Act to put down all political debate whatever." A brother alderman concurred in this sentiment. The most learned bodies were actuated by the same views. The Union—the well-known debating society at Cambridge—was arbitrarily suppressed by the Vice-Chancellor.[1] The mouth of the nation was gagged; and political discussion absolutely checked.

Repressive legislation was sanctioned at the time by the example of one great authority. Pitt, in the closing years of the eighteenth century, had been driven by the violence of the Jacobins to resort to arbitrary legislation of a similar character; and the halo which still surrounded Pitt's memory shed a reflected light on those who imitated his policy Posterity has hardly approved Pitt's later policy with the unanimity with which it has praised his earlier administration The mere fact that Pitt, at a particular juncture, took a certain course would not be regarded now, as it would have been fifty years ago, as proof of its wisdom. But Pitt's fame has suffered more from the servile imitation of his followers than from the criticisms of all his opponents. He has, in this way, been made indirectly responsible not merely for the acts of his own administration, but for the policy of his successors. Never was a greater injustice done to any minister. Pitt, during the close of his administration, stood at bay against Jacobinism The war with France in 1793 was a war against Jacobinism; and statesmen, who conceived such a war necessary, were logically compelled to combat the foe, which was simultaneously struggling against them in the United Kingdom. But the last excuse for repressive legislation had been removed by the battle of Waterloo. The exceptional state of things, which the Revolution had created, had passed away; for good or for evil, Legitimism had been restored; and an exhausted Continent had sunk into a sullen acquiescence. Revolution was no longer a danger, because revolution had everywhere

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xxxvi pp 1, 18 *Ann Reg*, 1817, Chron., pp 29, 33.

been stamped out; and the excuse for arbitrary government had been definitely removed by the restoration of order.

Nothing but the strongest necessity would have justified the legislation of 1817, and, though the state of society was critical, the crisis hardly warranted the severe legislation of that year. The Habeas Corpus Act had no sooner been suspended than the more violent members of the Tory party insisted on vigorous measures. A few weeks before the riot in Spa Fields, Cobbett had converted his *Register* into a twopenny paper; and even calm men conceived that the disorders of the country were due to the dissemination of Cobbett's inflammatory writings. "I did hope," wrote Southey to the Prime Minister, "that the first measure after the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act would have been to place the chief incendiary writer in safe custody. No means can be effectual for checking the intolerable license of the press but that of making transportation the punishment for its abuse." [1] The disappointment which Southey thus expressed was, however, soon removed. The ministry dared not prosecute Cobbett, but Cobbett, on his part, dared not risk the chance of a second prosecution. Overburdened with debt, with a vivid recollection of his two years' imprisonment in his mind, he decided on withdrawing from the country and emigrating to America. The suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act had thus the effect of driving the most formidable political writer of the day into temporary exile.

The withdrawal of Cobbett from the scene of his former achievements did not allay the agitation which was troubling the country. Up to the close of 1816, indeed, there is every reason to believe that the agitation was only intended to promote the cause of a sweeping measure of reform. An agitation of this character, however, conducted by a secret organisation, was almost certain, sooner or later, to lead to the adoption of more dangerous measures. Some of the more reckless members of the Hampden Clubs or of the Spencean Societies were sure to declare that no means could be undesir-

[1] Liverpool, vol. ii. p 298.

able which were employed to promote ends which all agreed in desiring. Force and intimidation, the forerunner of force, became occasionally mentioned as possible expedients for promoting the reform of Parliament; and the members of the Scotch clubs bound themselves by an oath to further the objects of their organisation "either by moral or physical strength, as the case may require." [1] The extreme measures which the Government adopted for repressing the agitation had naturally the effect of increasing the violence of those who fancied that they were endangered by them. Fires, which it seemed possible to trace to incendiaries, broke out in agricultural districts. Riots, necessitating the interference of the military, occurred at intervals in various parts of the country. Manchester was the focus in which discontent was concentrated; and a great meeting was held in Manchester on the 3rd of March to protest against the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. The meeting adopted the fashionable expedient of the Reformers of the day. It was adjourned to the following Monday, the 10th of March. And it was agreed that ten out of every twenty persons who attended the adjourned meeting should proceed to London on foot with a petition to the Prince Regent. The petitioners were recommended to provide themselves with a blanket; and in consequence their march is known in history as the march of the "Blanketeers."

There is no doubt that this march was organised with a different intention from that which had animated the wretched colliers, who had dragged their loaded waggons through the country in the previous year. It was the object of the colliers to excite compassion, it was the object of the Blanketeers to cause alarm. They were assured by their leaders that they were a most formidable body; they were persuaded in a few instances to provide themselves with arms; they were told that similar deputations from the manufacturing towns of Yorkshire would meet them on the road; and that the military would be powerless to resist them. The

The Blanketeers.

[1] See the prosecutions of Edgar and M'Kinlay, in *State Trials*, vol. xxxiii. pp. 145–632. *Hansard*, vol xxxv p. 729.

meeting took place accordingly on the day named for it. Some 10,000 or 12,000 persons are supposed to have attended it,[1] and considerable numbers of them set out for London. Never did a serious demonstration more completely collapse. On the evening preceding the meeting four of the supposed leaders were arrested on warrants specially sent down by the Secretary of State. A few persons, who harangued a mob on the Sunday, were summarily conveyed by a party of dragoons to the Old Bailey. Sir John Byng, who commanded the forces in the district, assembled a few troops of yeomanry at Salemoor, in the immediate vicinity of Manchester, on the Monday morning. The petitioners, on their march through Stockport, were intercepted by a troop of Life Guards, and some forty of them were arrested and conveyed back to Manchester. Notwithstanding these disasters, 500 stragglers succeeded in penetrating to Macclesfield.[2] Not more than twenty crossed the borders of Staffordshire. Fainting with fatigue, without baggage, without food, these few wretched wanderers excited nothing but pity.[3]

The demonstration had collapsed; and its collapse had not been due to the special legislation which the Government had thought necessary. On the 10th of March the Seditious Meetings Act had not passed. Yet the powers at the disposal of the authorities had proved amply sufficient to deal with every difficulty. In the eyes of the Government, however, the danger had not been averted; it had only been postponed. Lord Sidmouth was in constant communication with a man named Oliver, who supplied him with continuous reports of the progress of the insurrection. Oliver had, in the first instance, become accidentally acquainted with the designs of the conspirators; he had availed himself of the accident to keep himself informed of the objects of the conspiracy; and he had transmitted all that he learned, and possibly all that he believed, to Sidmouth. Sidmouth, later on, was attacked for listening to a spy. It was insinuated

Subsequent plans of the Radicals.

[1] Bamford says 4000 or 5000. *Life of a Radical*, vol. i. p. 32.
[2] Bamford says 180.
[3] *Ann. Reg.*, 1817, Chron., pp. 19–22, and Hist., p. 67.

that Oliver was employed to foment the proceedings which he had made it his trade to discover. Charges of this character do not deserve much attention. The objects of a conspiracy can only be discovered by the revelations of some of the conspirators; and a minister who takes the high moral line of refusing to listen to a spy may lose the opportunity of averting a serious disaster. If, however, occasions may occur when a minister may legitimately listen to an informer, the evidence of every informer should always be received with considerable suspicion. An informer, from his very nature, must be treacherous to his own friends. The man who, from fear of punishment or love of gain, stoops to betray his friends may be tempted to go one step further and deceive his employers. A good deal of the information which we possess of the designs of the conspirators in 1817 rests on the evidence of men like Oliver. For this reason the account must be accepted with some hesitation.[1]

The demonstration of the 10th of March had ended in a conspicuous failure. But the leaders of the mob decided on another attempt. "A general rising," to use the expression of the secret committee of the House of Commons, "a general insurrection," to use the phrase employed by the Lords' committee, was arranged for the 30th of March. 2000 or 3000 men were to be assembled in the dead of the night at Manchester; the magistrates were to be seized; the prisoners were to be liberated; the soldiers were to be surprised in their barracks; and the general discontent was to be increased by the burning of some of the factories which continued to afford employment to the workpeople.[2] Expectations were held out that risings would simultaneously take place in Lancaster, York, Warwick, Leicester, Nottingham, Chester, and Stafford.

[1] See (as to Oliver) numerous debates in the House of Lords and in the House of Commons. *Hansard*, vols. xxxvi. and xxxviii. Oliver, in fact, took up more Parliamentary time and received more attention, both in 1817 and in 1818, than almost any other subject.

[2] Bamford heard of this through a friend. The friend had been told by a stranger that they were going to make a Moscow of Manchester Bamford told the fellow he would have nothing to do with it, and evidently regarded the stranger as a fool or a spy.—Vol i p. 37.

Two days, however, before the date fixed for the insurrection, warrants were issued by the Secretary of State, on the representation of the local magistracy, for the apprehension of the ringleaders This simple precaution disconcerted the conspirators, and the rising was postponed. But a few delegates, as they called themselves, from some eight manufacturing towns, were still anxious to contrive "some general plan of simultaneous and connected insurrection, to march upon London, to overturn the existing Government, and to establish a republic." The 9th of June was fixed for this new demonstration The arrest of some of the ringleaders on the 6th of June, at Huddersfield, again disconcerted the plans of the conspirators. The rising resulted in a riot at Huddersfield, and a rather more serious riot in the Midland Counties. "The mass of the population through which the insurgents passed evinced," so the House of Commons' committee admitted, "the utmost abhorrence of their designs and projects."[1]

The progress of the insurrection suggested new precautions to the Government. At the commencement of June the Regent communicated fresh information to both Houses of Parliament; and, on the motion of the ministers, the secret committees of February were revived for the purpose of considering the information thus obtained. Both committees agreed that these papers afforded "but too many proofs of the continued existence of a traitorous conspiracy for the overthrow of our established Government and Constitution, and for the subversion of the existing order of society." Both of them expressed "their conviction that it is not yet safe to rely entirely, for the preservation of the public tranquillity, upon the ordinary powers of the law."[2] Both of them, therefore, pointed to the continued suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. The Act had only been suspended, in the first instance, till the close of the session; and fresh legislation was, therefore, necessary, if its suspension were to

Revival of the secret committees

[1] *Ann Reg*, 1817, Hist., p 81.
[2] Ibid., pp. 65, 81. *Hansard*, vol. xxxvi. pp. 949, 1089.

be renewed. Some members of the Opposition, in both Houses, actively resisted the Government. They denied, in the first place, the necessity for any extraordinary powers; they endeavoured, in the next place, to limit their duration; and they desired, in the third place, to except Scotland from the operation of the bill. But the terror which animated the country paralysed their efforts. Lord Grenville and all his following supported the ministry. The abortive risings at Manchester, Huddersfield, and Derby, occurring at the very moment at which the secret committees were deliberating, strengthened the hands of the administration. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended till the 1st of March 1818.[1] Since that date the Habeas Corpus Act has never been suspended in Great Britain.

Abortive prosecutions.

Ministers had been singularly successful in forcing these repressive measures through Parliament, but they did not enjoy a similar success in punishing the persons whom they had succeeded in apprehending. They could only justify their conduct in Parliament by indicting the rioters for high treason; and the evidence of treason rested on the testimony of informers, who were not likely to gain credence from juries. The grand jury of Middlesex, indeed, found a true bill against Watson, Thistlewood, and the other leaders of the Spa Fields riots. But the common jury declined to convict Watson; and after his acquittal the Attorney-General abstained from proceeding against the other prisoners. A formidable riot, meriting severe punishment, had been left unpunished, from the folly of the ministry in dignifying some obscure men by charging them with high treason. A similar failure awaited the ministry in York. Twenty-four persons arrested on the eve of the riot at Huddersfield were charged with high treason. The ability and the wealth at the disposal of the Government were freely applied for the purpose of ensuring their conviction "A large portion of the weight and talent of the Bar on the Northern circuit was ranged on the

[1] *Hansard*, pp. 975–1017, 1044–1063, 1109–1155, 1198–1254. *Ann. Reg.*, 1817, Hist., p. 83. Romilly, vol. iii. p 305.

side of the prosecution; and, that nothing might be wanting to give importance to these proceedings, Mr. Gurney was sent down from London at the expense of the Government to take reports of the trials. Against all this weight of power and influence, seconded by the public purse, a few obscure men and boys, principally in the very lowest ranks in society, had to defend themselves. The odds were terrific." But the obscure men and boys defeated all the efforts of the ministry and their professional assistants. No bills were found against eleven of the prisoners; ten were pronounced not guilty; one was liberated on bail; and the remaining two were detained in prison without trial, by a Secretary of State's warrant, under the authority of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act.[1] The trials at York and the trials in London formed a strange commentary on the arbitrary proceedings which ministers had adopted.

These successive failures induced the ministry to redouble their exertions against the rioters of Derby. Brandreth, the leader of the unfortunate riot which had broken out on the 9th of June, was a very extraordinary personage. He was popularly known as the "Nottinghamshire Captain," and he seems to have possessed many of the qualities which fit men for leading their fellow-creatures. Utterly uneducated, a pauper in receipt of parish relief, his "great courage," his "uncommon decision," his "unrelenting firmness," gave him "that sort of instinctive influence which even in his humble station there is no resisting." He had "an eye," said his counsel, "like no eye that I ever beheld before, a countenance and a figure formed for active enterprise and command." During the course of the trial Byron's magnificent description of the Corsair was applied to him:— Trial of the Derby rioters.

> "With these he mingles not but to command,
> Few are his words, but keen his eye and hand;
> . . . . . .
> Whose name appals the fiercest of his crew,
> And tints each swarthy cheek with sallower hue.

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1817, Chron., p. 72.

Still sways their souls with that commanding art
That dazzles, leads, yet chills the vulgar heart.
What is that spell that thus his lawless train
Confess and envy, yet oppose in vain?
What should it be that thus their faith can bind?
The power of Thought—the magic of the Mind!"

"I need not care whether I live or die," were Brandreth's words in prison, "for there are no Derbyshire ribs now."[1] A change of fashion, which had deprived him of his humble livelihood, had, in other words, made Brandreth reckless. His acts were indisputably criminal On the evening of Monday, the 9th of June, he assembled some 500 men, to whom he had previously communicated the outline of his plans, and addressed them in some rugged doggrel:—

"Every man his skill must try·
He must turn out and not deny;
No bloody soldier must he dread,
He must turn out and fight for bread.
The time is come, you plainly see,
The Government opposed must be"[2]

Arms were obtained by threats and violence from several householders too terrified to resist the rioters. A man, who ventured to oppose them, was shot dead by Brandreth.[3] This act of violence increased the terror with which the rioters were already regarded. Arms were everywhere given to them; and the men, thus strengthened, marched through the night towards Nottingham News of the disturbance had, in the meanwhile, reached the authorities. The Yeomanry assembled; and the rioters, when morning dawned, "saw themselves confronted with a force which made resistance hopeless. They dispersed rapidly, without risking an encounter, strewing the ground with the weapons which they had so lawlessly obtained."

There was no doubt whatever that Brandreth and his associates had committed a very serious crime. Brandreth

[1] "Derbyshire ribs" were, of course, the ribbed hosiery which was made in Derbyshire. An interesting account of the introduction of ribbed hosiery will be found in Baines' *History of the Cotton Manufacture.*

[2] *State Trials*, vol. xxxii. p. 804. [3] Ibid., p. 790.

had been guilty of a cold-blooded murder, and deserved to suffer the extreme penalty which the law has always permitted to be inflicted on offenders of this character. The Government, however, instead of indicting Brandreth and his associates for murder, charged them "with levying war against the king." The presiding judge told the jury that "armed insurrection for the purpose of effecting a change of government amounted in construction of law to a levying war against the king" The jury found Brandreth and two of his principal associates, Ludlam and Turner, guilty of high treason; and the three wretched men shortly afterwards forfeited their lives for the grave offence which they had committed against their country.[1]

The execution of Brandreth and his associates marked the conclusion of the so-called insurrection which had commenced with the riot in Spa Fields The cause to which the disturbances had really been due was gradually disappearing; and with the disappearance of the cause the disturbance itself subsided During the first seven months of 1817 wheat was never quoted at a lower price than £5 a quarter; but, as the summer wore on, hot weather and the appearance of a better harvest led to a rapid fall of prices. Wheat fell in August to an average of 86*s.* 2*d.*, and through the rest of the year its price stood at about £4 a quarter. "In Devonshire every article of life is falling," wrote Lord Exmouth to Lord Sidmouth in the middle of September; "the panic among the farmers wearing off; and, above all, that hitherto marketable article, discontent, is everywhere disappearing."[2] Consols, which stood at 62 in January, rose to 81 in August. During the whole of 1816, and during the first half of 1817, there had on an average been 170 bankruptcies a month in England alone. During the last six months of 1817 there were only 555 bankruptcies, or about 92 a month. The trade of the country was at the same time steadily improving. "Trade of every kind is recovering, and

Return of prosperity and subsidence of disturbance

1 Brandreth's trial will be found in *State Trials*, vol. xxxii p 755, Turner's on page 957, Ludlam's on page 1135.

2 Sidmouth, vol. iii. p. 198.

not a loom is idle in Glasgow," wrote Scott to the Duke of Buccleuch.[1] The official value of the imports rose from £26,374,921 in 1816 to £29,910,502 in 1817; the official value of the exports of home produce from £34 774,521 to £39,233,467.[2] Everything, therefore, tended to show that trade was improving, and with the restoration of prosperity confidence returned. Brandreth might have lived to die a natural death if the demand for Derbyshire ribs had been maintained; and thousands of Brandreths, in every part of the country, were prepared to continue quietly at work, if work were only forthcoming for them. A good harvest and a brisker trade had concluded the disturbance which a bad harvest and a dull trade had been mainly instrumental in fomenting.

Measures of retrenchment

During the continuance of the session, the symptoms of the coming change were hardly visible. The appearance of the country was gloomy in the extreme; and the year was not sufficiently advanced to justify any reliance on the coming harvest. A failing revenue and an impoverished people suggested the propriety of economy; and the Regent had consequently been advised, in the speech in which he opened Parliament, to commend "the state of the public income and expenditure" to the "early and serious attention" of the House of Commons. The session was hardly a week old before Castlereagh, as the leader of the Government, explained the steps which the ministry was prepared to take to carry out the Regent's advice. Large reductions of expenditure in every branch of the public service were freely promised. But the ministry did not rely on these reductions alone. The entire expenditure of the State was referred to a select committee, with power "to consider what further measures may be adopted for the relief of the country without detriment to the public interest." In the meanwhile Castlereagh announced that the Regent

Appointment of Finance Committee

[1] Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 355.

[2] *Ann Reg*, 1817, Hist., pp. 238–240 M'Culloch's *Commercial Dictionary*, ad verb Imports and Exports.

resigned to the public one-fifth of his whole receipts, or £50,000 a year; and that "the public servants of the Crown were also anxious to offer their assistance, by contributing what the property-tax, had it been continued, would have taken from them."[1]

These proposals were generous; but the feeling of the House was so strong that the ministry was blamed by its opponents for want of generosity. Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition, who was in the enjoyment of a considerable pension, offered "to give up in the same proportion as the Regent;" in other words, to surrender one-fifth instead of one-tenth of his pension. The Opposition, with some show of reason, endeavoured to exclude placemen from a committee which was intended to propose the reduction of superfluous places. The ministers succeeded in resisting the attempt; but the temper which animated the House was unmistakable. The committee met; and its attention was, at once, directed to the numerous sinecure offices, which existed in almost every department of the Government. There were the Chief Justices in Eyre, north and south of the Trent, with no duties to perform, and £4000 a year for performing them. There was the clerk of the Pells, with £3000 a year, and the four tellers of the Exchequer, with £2700 each. There was the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, with £3000 a year, and the Governor of the Isle of Wight, with £600, there was the office of clerk of the Parliaments, worth £5000 a year to the gentleman who was so fortunate as to possess it.[2] There were the four clerks of the Signet, and the four clerks of the Privy Seal. The sinecures in Scotland and Ireland were in comparison even more numerous and more costly than those in England. The committee saw "no reason to doubt that the annual income now derived from the offices which are thus brought under the observation of the House, as being at the disposal of the Crown, and fit to be abolished or regulated,

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xxxv. pp. 252, 307, *Ann. Reg.*, 1819, Hist., p. 39.

[2] *Ann. Reg.*, 1817, Chron., p. 306 Colchester, vol. ii. p 602, where the salary of the Lord Warden is given as £5000 instead of £3000 a year.

may be estimated at from £90,000 to £100,000."[1] The committee did not include in their report some offices which, since that day, have been swept away with advantage to the public.

Reduction of sinecures.

The report of the committee of 1817, and the excitement which universal distress had produced, compelled the Government to take some steps to reduce the number of sinecures. In previous years they had successfully resisted any proposals of this character. But, from 1817 to the present time, useless and superfluous offices have been gradually diminished in number. Six acts were passed with this object in the session of 1817. The first dealt with certain offices in the Court of Exchequer; the second with the Chief Justices in Eyre, north and south of the Trent, the third with certain offices in Ireland; the fourth with the clerks of the Signet and of the Privy Seal; and the fifth with some Scotch offices. The sixth enabled the king to reward high political service with adequate pensions. A certain number of persons, who had served in the highest offices of the State, and who had occupied such positions for a definite period, were to be entitled to pensions on their retirement from the public service. The gross amount of all the pensions which the sovereign was thus authorised to grant was not, however, to exceed one-half the sum which the offices which were abolished had cost. On purely economical grounds, therefore, the change which was thus made was advantageous. But the economy, which was the direct result of it, formed only a portion of its merit.[2] All patronage is liable to abuse. But the patronage which is the most easily abused is that which deals with offices requiring no peculiar qualification and involving no special duties. A minister is apt to regard the calls of friendship or the claims of party as far more pressing than the reward of public merit; and the man who has devoted his abilities to the service of the State has the mortification of being superseded by some gentleman who has perhaps spent a thousand pounds in unsuccessfully contesting some borough. Abuses of this character were much greater when sinecures were in existence than they are now. A man

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1817, Chron., pp 308–315. [2] Ibid., p 318.

must have some qualifications for the post to be appointed to an office with definite duties attached to it. A man need have no qualifications for a situation which involves no cares but the punctual receipt of a considerable salary.

The first report of the committee of 1817 dealt exclusively with sinecures; the second was devoted to a consideration of the military and naval establishments; the third and most important dealt with the entire revenue and expenditure of the State. This report was not presented till the first week in June; the Budget was postponed till after its presentation, and was ultimately founded on the figures contained in it. These figures showed, in a remarkable way, the severity of the crisis through which the country had just passed. Up to the close of 1815 the revenue of Great Britain had been regularly and constantly increasing. The receipts from the most important branches, the customs, the excise, the stamps, and the Post-office, had risen from £42,293,083 in 1812 to £45,277,579 in 1815, they fell to £41,302,959 in 1816. The committee considered that, including the Irish revenue and other sources of taxation, they might fairly rely on a revenue of £51,905,364 during the year 1817. The sale of old stores was estimated to produce an additional £400,000, and thus raise the ways and means to £52,405 364. The expenditure of the State, which amounted to £68,064,260, was far more than this sum,[1] and exceeded the estimated

Report on the revenue

[1] The expenditure was as follows —

Interest of Funded Debt	£29,403,464
Sinking Fund of ditto	14,134,443
Civil List and other charges on Consolidated Fund	2,402,545
Exchequer Bills interest	1,900,000
Sinking Fund	330,000
Army	9,080,000
Navy	5,986,000
Navy and Transport debt	1,660,000
Ordnance	1,221,300
Miscellaneous	1,700,000
Total	£67,817,752
Add, to make good the permanent charges for Ireland from previous year	246,508
	£68,064,260

—*Hansard*, vol xxxvi., appendix, p. cii.

revenue by at least £15,850,000. The situation, however, was hardly so bad as this short statement of it seemed to indicate. The deficit was really due to the Sinking Fund; and, if the Sinking Fund had been suspended, the deficit could have been immediately converted into a surplus. In the expenditure of £68,250,000 no less than £16,124,443 was devoted to the payment of debt.[1] The temporary suspension of the Sinking Fund would at once have terminated the embarrassing situation.

The Sinking Fund

Vansittart, however, failed to perceive the wisdom of this obvious arrangement. He clung to the Sinking Fund with a tenacity which was worthy of a better cause, and amused himself for years with effecting large reductions of the debt on paper. He provided for the deficit of the year in various ways: a lottery supplied him with £250,000; a surplus in the ways and means for 1815 and 1816 afforded him £1,865,000; and the arrears of the property-tax which were still unpaid were relied on for £1,500,000. More than three millions and a half of the deficit was thus provided for. For the residue Vansittart relied on Irish Treasury bills amounting to £3,600,000, and on £9,000,000 of Exchequer bills.[2] The minister, in short, proposed to borrow £12,600,000 with one hand and to pay £16,000,000 of debt with the other. Both he and his colleagues seem to have been incapable of perceiving that the simpler, wiser, and more economical course would have been to have satisfied themselves with applying only the difference between these two sums to the reduction of debt.

The distress which characterised the year led to two other financial measures, widely different in their objects from those which have thus been mentioned, and differing also in their

[1] Sinking Fund £14,134,443
Exchequer Bills 330,000
Navy, &c., debt 1,660,000
Total . . £16,124,443

[2] See Report of Select Committee, *Hansard*, vol. xxxvi.; appendix, p lxxxi. Some of the figures were slightly altered in the Budget, *vide* pp. 1098–1109, and *Ann Reg.*, 1817, Hist., pp. 84–91. Cf. also Public Inc. and Exp., Sess. 1869, No. 366.

effects. The poverty of the country was so universal, and the burden thrown on the poor rates was so heavy, that the ministry felt itself compelled to afford some aid to the local authorities. The prudence of relieving local distress out of the public purse will probably always be disputed; but, if it can ever be desirable for the central authority to assist the local guardians of the poor, it was eminently advisable that they should do so in 1817. The distress at that time was not confined to particular districts, it was universal throughout the kingdom. A sudden and unprecedented fall in the rent of land was diminishing the rates on which the local authorities were solely dependent. The labouring classes, from a variety of causes, fancied that they were oppressed by the administration. It was evidently proper that the legislature should take some steps to show its sympathy with their cause. On the 28th of April the House of Commons authorised the Government to issue half a million of Exchequer bills in Great Britain, and a quarter of a million in Ireland, for the completion of public works in progress or to be commenced, for the encouragement of the fisheries, and for the employment of the poor. The money thus voted was to be advanced, on fair security, to different persons, and arrangements were to be made for the repayment of the principal in small instalments.[1]

Grants for local works.

The expenditure of three quarters of a million on the employment of the labouring poor could not practically have had any very great effect on the condition of the country. But another step, which Parliament took at the same time, produced much more beneficial consequences. The first breath of adversity had thrown the kingdom into universal poverty; and a poverty so universal and so sudden could only have arisen in a state of society where the masses of the population were in the habit of taking no thought for the future. The Poor Law had, in fact, deprived the poor of every motive to save and of all means of saving. The poorhouse afforded the labourer a miserable but

Institution of savings banks

[1] *Hansard*, vol xxxvi. p. 27. *Ann. Reg.*, 1817, Hist., p. 45.

certain retirement in his old age. The universal distribution of paltry doles in the shape of outdoor relief reconciled the labouring poor to a state of dependence. There was no shame in pauperism when every workman, at one time or another, was a pauper. There was no need for saving when the thrifty and the careless poor were equally certain of ending their days in the same common refuge, the parish poorhouse. In 1817 Parliament took one step towards encouraging thrift; it afforded the working poor the means of saving by establishing savings banks. There is a good deal in the constitution of these banks which is open to criticism. Since the establishment of the Post Office savings banks the old savings banks, in the opinion of some authorities, have survived their mission. But, in 1817, no one had foreseen the career of usefulness which the Post Office had before it. The old savings banks, then instituted for the first time, afforded the more industrious poor some prospect of escaping from the helplessness of their position. Their establishment relieves the almost universal gloom which shrouds the Parliamentary proceedings of 1817.[1]

The institution of savings banks was the one solitary advantage which resulted from the distress of 1817. Their institution redeems the character of the otherwise harsh legislation which was passed during the year. Harsh, however, as were the proceedings of the ministry, compliant as the legislature proved, the country never tolerated the exceptional laws which Parliament and Government thought necessary. Juries acquitted men at York and London who thoroughly deserved the severest punishment, because the ministry insisted on terming every riot a rebellion, and on contending that discontent was synonymous with high treason.

Abortive prosecutions of public writers.

[1] Savings banks had been advocated by Malthus, in his *Essay on Population*, and by Whitbread in 1807. In 1798 a bank for the savings of poor children was established at Tottenham, and it was extended to servants, labourers, and others in 1804. Savings banks were instituted at Bath in 1808, and at Ruthwell in 1810 "The first London savings bank did not commence its operations till January 1816." "Savings banks are rapidly spreading through Scotland," stated the *Edinburgh Review* in June 1815. Cobbett, singularly enough, denounced the scheme as "a bubble" (*Register*, Jan. 4, 1817) —*History of Thirty Years' Peace*, vol. i. p. 79 Alison, vol. i p 332 *Hansard*, vol. xxxiv. pp. 222-226.

The ministry was equally unfortunate in persuading the country to adopt its views in another respect. A host of voluntary advisers was ready to ascribe all the evils and miseries of the time to the freedom of the press. The press, in Sidmouth's judgment, was a most malignant and formidable enemy to the constitution to which it owed its freedom.[1] The press was supposed to be destroying the constitution, and the first duty of the Government was to muzzle the press The fears which were expressed by such men as Southey were almost universal in the upper classes. "Seriously," wrote Wilberforce in 1819, "the newspapers are among the very greatest, if not the greatest, evils of the country."[2] Such an opinion from such a man as Wilberforce deserves attention; but it ought, at the same time, to occasion no surprise. The newspapers which circulated among the lower orders were ribald, scurrilous, and profane. "I got the nineteen Sunday newspapers once for all the other day," wrote Wilberforce in 1820, "and assuredly such a collection of ribaldry and profaneness never before disgraced my library, and I trust never will again."[3] The newspapers, however, were not singular in their ribaldry and profaneness. Blasphemous parodies of the Liturgy, libellous broadsheets on the ministry, were issued from obscure printing presses and circulated among the lower orders, writers, whose license formed their only claim to notoriety, were busily attempting to throw contempt on the faith and the institutions which were held in veneration by the respectable portions of the community.

Publications of this character will probably always disgrace the civilisation of the world. The most careful sanitary administration fails to remove every nuisance from the best governed city; and the most paternal government will be powerless to supervise every broadsheet which is struck off by every obscure printer. It requires no great detective skill to discover the existence of vicious habits in any community; but it has been generally concluded that the needless expo-

[1] Sidmouth, vol. iii. p 283 [2] Wilberforce, vol. v. p 48.
[3] Ibid., p. 66

sure of vice is almost as great an evil as its existence. Sensible people shrink from publishing in the market-place the scenes which are daily acted in the by-ways of every great city; and the vicious, so long as they abstain from parading their vices, are tolerated by society. The same rule is probably applicable to immoral publications. An obscene book may be seized by a police officer and destroyed under a magistrate's orders, just as putrid meat may be seized and destroyed by the duly constituted authorities. The foul food for the body and the foul food for the mind are treated in the same way, and condemned to a destruction which limits their notoriety and annihilates the profits of their worthless purveyors. It is otherwise when the Government attempts to prosecute the authors or printers of blasphemous, seditious, or libellous publications. If the publications themselves be distinguished for ability, the ability of the writers fascinates their judges, and is held as their excuse. If they have no distinction but the blasphemy or ribaldry of their language, a State prosecution imparts to them the publicity which they could not otherwise have gained; and broadsheets which would have had a short and dishonourable circulation in the by-ways and alleys of the city are suddenly introduced to a fame which their own merits could never have acquired for them. The best patronage which can be afforded to any writer is the gratuitious advertisement of his writings; and the Government which honours the scurrilous with a public prosecution offers the maximum of encouragement to their works.

Unhappily, both for the country and for themselves, ministers thought otherwise. Impressed with the ribaldry of the publications which were being hawked through the community, convinced that the best interests of the nation demanded their suppression, they never paused to reflect on the consequences which would evidently follow from the publicity inseparable from State prosecutions. In the course of March 1817, Sidmouth, as Home Secretary, addressed a circular letter to the various Lords-Lieutenant, impressing on them the importance of preventing "as far as possible the circulation of blasphemous

and seditious pamphlets and writings, of which, for a considerable time past, great numbers have been sold and distributed throughout the country. The law officers," Sidmouth added, "had notified their opinion, that a justice of the peace may issue a warrant to apprehend a person charged before him upon oath with the publication of libels" of this nature. Under these circumstances, Sidmouth requested the Lieutenants of Counties to make known to the Chairman of each Quarter Sessions "the substance of this communication, in order that he may recommend to the several magistrates to act thereupon in all cases where any person shall be found offending against the law."[1]

This circular letter attracted attention in both Houses of Parliament. The law officers' law, on which it was founded, was questioned by high authorities; and the propriety of a Secretary of State taking upon himself to interpret and enjoin the execution of the law was loudly questioned.[2] The ministry's position, however, in both Houses of Parliament was so strong that large majorities supported Sidmouth's policy, and the Cabinet, probably encouraged by this support, determined on proceeding against the authors of some of the most ribald publications. The ministers had not yet learned from a long and painful experience that the feelings of the ordinary British juryman were opposed to needless prosecutions of obscure persons. A long series of failures had not yet convinced them of their unpopularity or induced them to pause in their headlong career. In the eyes of Liverpool and his colleagues the printing press was the galvanic battery which infused life into the proceedings of the disaffected, and the summary arrest of every rioter was nothing if a single newspaper were allowed to scatter broadcast the seeds of sedition. An obscure paper, the *Black Dwarf*, was the first object of their attack. The *Black Dwarf* had published on the 2nd of April a scurrilous article against the ministry. It had declared that ministers had "talked of patriotism when they meant plunder," and that

[1] *Ann Reg*, 1817, Hist., p. 60.
[2] *Hansard*, vol. xxxvi. pp. 445-516, 1158-1187.

they had embarked on a war with "France, not to conquer that country, but ourselves." Scurrilous nonsense of this description should have been passed over in silence and with contempt. The ministry made the mistake of distinguishing Wooler, the printer and publisher of the paper, with a State prosecution. Nothing could have been more favourable for Wooler's interests. His miserable libel, solemnly read in court, was, of course, immediately published in every part of the country. A scurrilous article, which could never have otherwise obtained a thousand readers, was read by millions; and Wooler, who undertook his own defence, had the satisfaction of being loudly cheered, and of finding that the officers of the court were unable to suppress the applause. The *Black Dwarf* had been made a hero. "In the *Black Dwarf* we have got a giant in talent on our side," wrote old Major Cartwright.[1] These results would have been sufficiently serious if the ministry had succeeded in the prosecution. It had not even the solitary consolation of achieving success. The foreman of the jury, indeed, returned a verdict of "guilty," and the judge was proceeding to act upon it, when it transpired that the finding was not the finding of the entire jury. The judge could not, of course, accept a verdict which was not unanimous; and Wooler, like Watson and the Huddersfield rioters, had the credit of achieving a victory over the Government.[2]

Wooler

Wooler's trial took place in June. The country was still in a state of ferment. The insurrection, which had resulted in Brandreth's rising, was supposed to be on the eve of occurring; and the ministry might be pardoned for being carried away by the terrors which it professed to feel. As the year wore on, however, every symptom of danger gradually subsided; confidence returned; the persons arrested under the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act were released; and the last excuse for

[1] *Life of Cartwright*, vol. ii. p. 165

[2] *Ann Reg*, 1817, Chron, p. 165. Wooler was subsequently concerned in the election of Sir Charles Wolseley as Legislatorial Attorney for Birmingham, and imprisoned.—*Vide infra*, p 506, and *Ann. Reg*, 1820, Chron p. 961.

exceptional measures was removed by the suppression of all panic. Neither, however, the failure which they had incurred in prosecuting Wooler, Watson, and the Huddersfield rioters, nor the return of confidence, deterred the ministers from persevering in the extraordinary course which they were bent on pursuing. In the middle of December 1817 they proceeded against a small publisher, William Hone, for a profane book which he had published and sold.[1] Hone had parodied some of the most solemn services of the Church of England—the Litany, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Church Catechism. The parody of the Creed was called the "Sinecurist's Creed;" the parody of the Litany, the "Political Litany;" and these titles will perhaps convey the purport of the parodies without polluting the pages of history with their offensive and profane language. Every right thinking person must feel contempt for a writer who deliberately tries to cast ridicule on the words of services which, whether he believe them or not, he knows are regarded with veneration by the mass of his fellow-countrymen. Such a writer deserves to be scouted by every honest man and reprobated by every decent person. The last course, however, to take with such a writer is to give currency to his works by honouring him with a prosecution. Yet this was the course which was deliberately taken by Lord Liverpool's ministry. On the 18th of December the Attorney-General prosecuted Hone for his seditious and profane libels on those parts of our Church Service called the Catechism, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Mr. Justice Abbott, before whom the case was tried, told the jury that the production was "highly scandalous and irreligious, and therefore libellous." But, notwithstanding this direction, the jury, after only a quarter of an hour's con-

Trial of Hone.

[1] Hone, a bookseller, living in a little shop in the Old Bailey, was a very remarkable man. He was possessed of various and extensive information, and some of his publications—his "Every Day Book," for example—were very useful. He was described as a "middle-aged man—a bland and smiling man—with a half-sad, half merry twinkle in his eye—a 'seedy man,' to use an expressive word, whose black coat is wondrous brown and threadbare"—*Hist. of the Thirty Years' Peace*, vol i p 145.

sideration, returned a verdict of not guilty; and the finding was received with applause in every part of the court.[1]

The verdict of the jury, in direct opposition to the charge of the judge, ought to have convinced the ministry and its advisers of the folly of the prosecutions which they were pressing. But on the day after Hone's acquittal on one charge they insisted on trying him on another, before Lord Ellenborough and a special jury. In the previous trial they had charged Hone with his parodies on the Catechism, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. In the second they charged him with libel for his parody on the Litany. The Attorney-General pressed on the jury the enormity of Hone's offence, and attempted to add force to his arguments by quoting passages from the parody. But his object was defeated by the "indecorous laughter" which immediately rose in the court. The Attorney-General, disconcerted, declared that if the parody were not a libel "there was no insult of the kind that might not be offered to the established religion and to the sacred writings with impunity." Ellenborough, with very doubtful propriety, pronounced the publication to be a most impious and profane libel; but the jury, in less than two hours, returned a verdict of not guilty. Hone had now been acquitted on two of the three charges preferred against him. With incredible folly the ministry, instead of withdrawing the remaining charge, persisted on the succeeding day in prosecuting him for his parody on the Athanasian Creed. The "Sinecurist's Creed," one of the counsel for the Crown declared, was "of the worst class of productions." But the jury thought otherwise. After an absence of half-an-hour they returned a verdict of not guilty. "The moment the words were pronounced a spontaneous burst of applause issued from the crowd in the court, which soon extended to the crowd outside; and for some minutes the halls and adjoining avenues rang with shouts and acclamations. Some days afterwards a liberal subscription was entered into for Mr. Hone and his family." The folly of the ministry had made a hero of a pro-

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1817, Chron., p 161.

fane parodist, whose productions, but for the persecution of the Government, would have been regarded with contempt by every member of society.[1]

Hone's trials had one effect which the ministry probably had not foreseen. The first of the three trials had been before Mr. Justice Abbott, the two last before Lord Ellenborough, the Chief Justice of England It was probably hoped that Ellenborough's high authority would influence the jury, and that with his assistance a conviction would be secured. But it became painfully evident, during the progress of the trials, that Ellenborough had no longer either the health or the temper to qualify him for his office. He suffered himself to become involved in a dispute with the prisoner about the admissibility of evidence; and, after dogmatically laying down the law, was obliged to give way. The mortification which he suffered at the result of the trials made him resolve on resigning, and, though his resignation was delayed for a time, he retired in the following autumn. There was much to condemn in Lord Ellenborough's career, yet it was difficult to supply his place. Sir Vicary Gibbs, the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, was a sound lawyer. But he had been distinguished for a virulent persecution of the press as Attorney-General; he was a disagreeable and unpopular judge; and he was in weak health. Shepherd, the Attorney-General, was deaf, and therefore physically incapacitated for the post.[2] Gifford, the solicitor, was a young man, and anxious to remain for a further period at the Bar. Under these circumstances the ministry decided on promoting Abbott, one of the Puisne Judges of the King's Bench. Charles Abbott was one of the four distinguished men, Arkwright, Turner, Abbott, and Sugden, who have sprung from a barber's shop. He was born in 1762, and published his celebrated essay on shipping, when he was forty years of age, in 1802. His practice had been entirely behind the Bar when he was raised to the Bench in

1 *Ann. Reg.*, 1817, Chron , p. 175. Hone's other productions are full of information, and deserve anything but contempt.

2 Eldon, vol. ii p 324.

1816.[1] He had filled the situation of Puisne Judge with ability and dignity; and his promotion to the higher office was generally approved. Nor were the expectations which were formed at the time disappointed. Abbott filled his high office for fourteen years, and is still regarded as having been an upright and able Chief Justice.

The town still rang with the story of Hone's acquittals when Parliament met on the 27th of January 1818. The ministry had failed in nearly all the prosecutions which the law officers had attempted, and its failure threw suspicion on the whole system of administration. In other respects, however, the situation was improved. "In the course of the autumn a gradual reduction in the price of provisions, and still more, an increased demand for labour, in consequence of a progressive improvement in the state of agriculture, as well as of trade and manufactures in some of their most important branches, afforded the means of subsistence and employment to numbers of those who had been taught to ascribe all the privations to which they were unfortunately subjected to defects in the existing constitution."[2] Cheaper food and higher wages reconciled the people to their lot; and the employment of the working classes removed the chief inducement to riot. At the opening of the session the ministry was able to announce that the necessity for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act had ceased. The Opposition heartily welcomed the repeal of the arbitrary law of the previous session, though they took the opportunity of commenting with severity on the extraordinary trials at Manchester, at Derby, and in London. Romilly, who was their chief representative on the occasion, declared his conviction "that the late suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act was a most unnecessary and mischievous measure," and his apprehension that it would form "a most dangerous precedent." The opinion of the great philanthropist has been shared by posterity; his apprehension

Meeting of Parliament.

[1] Eldon, vol. ii. p. 324, and Denman, vol i. p 404.

[2] Report of Secret Committee of House of Commons, *Ann. Reg.*, vol. lx, p. 247. *Hansard*, vol. xxxvii. p 679.

has fortunately proved groundless. Since the days of Romilly the country has passed through greater crises, and has been the scene of greater popular commotions than those which disturbed Liverpool, Sidmouth, and Castlereagh in 1817. But no Government since that time has ever ventured to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act in Great Britain. No succeeding minister has ventured on infringing the constitution for the sake of preserving it.

Though the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act was suffered to expire, ministers, in their own justification, moved for fresh secret committees in both Houses of Parliament to consider the state of the country. New sets of papers, sealed up in green bags, were again referred to these committees, and before the close of February both committees reported upon them. The committees, which were almost entirely composed of the persons who had constituted the committees of the previous session, naturally adhered to the story which they had already told. A rising was to have taken place in the beginning of June. Nottingham was the centre of the supposed insurrection; and both the riots at Derby as well as the disturbances at Huddersfield, unimportant as they proved, were in reality connected with this premeditated outbreak. In the opinion of the committees the vigilance of the Government and the activity of the magistrates had defeated the designs of the leaders of the disaffected; the increased employment of the labouring classes had diminished the ranks of their followers; and the few people who continued to persevere in their projects had smaller numbers and resources to rely upon than before. The Government had, in consequence, been able to discharge all the persons who had been arrested under the Act of the previous session; and, in discharging them, as well as in their original arrest, had acted with leniency and moderation. Only forty-four persons, who had not been brought to trial, had been arrested under the warrants of the Secretary of State; seven of them had been discharged on examination; the thirty-seven others, imprisoned under warrants of detention,

Appointment of new secret committees

had all been detained in consequence of information upon oath. Both committees were of opinion that the arrest and detention of these persons were justified by the circumstances of the case.[1]

Armed with these reports, the Government, on the 23rd of February, introduced a bill into the House of Lords for indemnifying persons who, since the 26th of January 1817, had acted in apprehending, imprisoning, or detaining in custody persons suspected of high treason or treasonable practices, and in the suppression of tumultuous and unlawful assemblies. The bill was founded on precedent; it was the logical consequence of the arbitrary measures to which the Government had resorted; and it would have been impossible for any legislature which had passed those measures to have refused assent to it. The Opposition, however, resisted it at every stage. The ministry, they insisted, was in a dilemma. If it had not acted with the moderation with which the secret committees credited it, what became of the reports of the secret committees? If it had studiously kept within its powers, where was the necessity for an indemnity? These arguments really dealt with only the fringe of the question. Whenever arbitrary powers are granted, either to the government of a country or to its local magistracy, acts must be committed on imperfect evidence which it would be difficult or even impossible to justify before a jury. If the legislature of a State decide to confer arbitrary powers on its magistracy, the least it can do is to indemnify them from any penal consequences which they may incur in exercising them. The true basis of complaint in 1818 was that the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended on inadequate grounds. No reasonable man ought to have complained of the legislature

Passage of an Indemnity Bill

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1818, Chron., pp 240-249 *Hansard*, vol. xxxvii. pp. 568-575, and 679-690, where the reports of both committees will be found. Bamford was one of the persons arrested. His account of his arrest (on grounds which were utterly insufficient) and of his imprisonment will be found in the *Life of a Radical*, vol. i. p. 80, *seq.*, a book which is well worth reading.

which indemnified the magistracy for carrying out the policy on which Parliament had resolved.[1]

With the passage of the Indemnity Act of 1818 the last record of the so-called insurrection of 1817 passed away. Consols, which had stood at 63 in January 1817, were quoted at 80 in January 1818. Wheat, which on the former date had averaged 103*s* a quarter, was sold at 85*s*. The demand for labour steadily increased; and the operatives, who a year before had been clamouring for employment, were able to stipulate for better wages. The Lancashire cotton spinners struck work; and their strike is memorable, because it was one of the earliest struggles, conducted on a large scale, between the rival powers of capital and labour. The case of the spinners was temperately stated. Up to the middle of 1816, when trade first began to decline, they had been able to earn about 24*s* a week; but their labours had commenced at five o'clock in the morning and had continued till seven in the evening. In 1816 they were assured by their employers that the fall in prices made it impossible for them to continue these terms; and they submitted to a reduction of from 20 to 25 per cent in their wages. The employers seem either to have promised or to have implied that, on the return of better times, the old wage-rate should be restored. The better times returned; but the wages were not raised. The cotton spinners, it was argued, had suffered less than any other operative class during the recent period of distress; they should not, it was urged, press unduly on their employers. The struggle, which commenced in this way in the beginning of July, was protracted till the middle of September.

Strike of the cotton spinners.

[1] The debates on the bill were very protracted. See, for the House of Lords, *Hansard*, vol xxxvii pp. 618–670, 713–735, 788 811 For the House of Commons, ibid., pp 881–922, 953–961, 965–1043, 1058 1060, 1080–1100 It was on the occasion of one of the numerous debates on the bill that Canning described one of the prisoners, who was made the object of especial sympathy, as "the revered and ruptured Ogden" The amusing epithets were probably justifiable, but they were certainly indiscreet In the Parliamentary history the phrase is altered to the "revered and unhappy Ogden" *Hansard*, vol. xxxvii p 1026 But there can be no doubt that Canning used the less discreet words.—See Stapleton's *Canning*, vol i. p 86.

The men on strike were regularly supported by contributions levied on other operatives; and the masters, unable to achieve a complete victory, were forced to content themselves with a disadvantageous compromise. They declined to submit to the general advance of seven shillings a week which the men demanded. But they took the men back at advances differing in their rates according to the circumstances of the case. The men in this way attained substantially the ends which they had in view. The masters had the satisfaction of feeling that their concessions were made to individuals, and not to the Union. Neither side, therefore, achieved an entire victory. But the circumstances of the strike, the spirit with which it was sustained, and the period during which it was protracted, afford a remarkable proof that the strength of the working classes was increasing, and that the depression of 1817 had already disappeared.[1]

The condition of the revenue confirmed this conclusion. The year 1817 had witnessed an almost continuous financial depression The committee of that year had relied on a revenue of £51,905,364, £51,665,460 (or £239,904 less than the estimate) was received during the year. But a large portion of this sum, or £2,330,531, was due to the arrears of unappropriated war duties and of the property tax. Without these arrears the deficit would have reached £2,570,435. Nothing, then, could have been more unfavourable than the financial results of 1817. Fortunately, however, the symptoms of improvement were already visible. During the first quarter of 1818 the revenue rose from £10,513,504, its amount in the corresponding portion of 1817, to £11,309,273 This improvement, in the opinion of the Select Committee on Finance, was "manifestly the consequence of an extensive and important change in the general condition of the country." The change, in fact, was "too well known and felt by the House and the country to render it necessary to dwell upon it."

The Revenue

[1] See mention of strike in *Ann. Reg.*, 1818, Chron., pp. 90, 101, 103, 121, 123, 128.

The rapid increase of the revenue simplified the duty of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The expenditure of 1817 had been placed at £67,817,752, and had actually reached £68,096,245. The expenditure of 1818 was estimated at £67,351,737.[1] There were, however, three various additions to be made to this sum. In the first place, the deficiencies and arrears of previous years amounted to £337,744; and in the next place, two other formidable items had also to be provided for. Ever since the conclusion of the war Wilberforce had been pressing on the ministry the duty of urging foreign powers to imitate the example of England and abolish the slave trade. The ministers had, at first, only faintly seconded the exertions of the great philanthropist. But the temper of the country had convinced them that more vigorous measures were necessary; and Castlereagh and Wellington had been instructed to urge abolition on the representatives of every nation at Vienna.[2] Spain, among other countries, undertook to abolish the trade,[3] but she pleaded, as an excuse for delay, the losses which her subjects would suffer if the trade, in which they had embarked their capital, and to which they had devoted their abilities, were suddenly destroyed. The British ministry, in consequence, agreed to pay to the Spanish Government £400,000 as a compensation for these losses; and the payment of the sum added the second exceptional item to the expenditure of the

The slave trade

[1] Debt and sinking fund £44,437,195
Other charges on the Consolidated Fund 2,160,968
Unfunded debt 2,300,000
Army 8,967,974
Navy 6,456,800
Ordnance 1,245,600
Miscellaneous 1,783,200

Total . . £67,351,737

[2] See Wilberforce, vol. iv pp 189–200.

[3] The treaty, which was concluded on Sept. 23, 1817, made it illegal for Spanish ships to carry on the slave trade on any part of the coast of Africa to the north of the equator *from the date of the treaty;* and from May 30, 1820, abolished the African trade entirely Cf Alison, vol. i. p. 352. The treaty was evaded, and was of very little good.

year. It is probably impossible to defend a grant of this description on strict principle. It is difficult to see why one country should be compelled to compensate another for doing an act of ordinary humanity. But, if it be difficult to defend a grant of this character, it is still more so to condemn it without reserve. The generosity of the action forms its fittest excuse, and redeems its authors from the charge of extravagance. The circumstances of the grant afford a striking testimony to the progress which abolition principles had made. Only eleven years had passed since the British slave trade had been abolished by Parliament. An agitation protracted through an entire generation had been barely sufficient to effect its abolition. In the eleven years which had succeeded, the abolition of the slave trade had become a pressing question; and Great Britain had, on two successive occasions, in the case of Portugal in 1815, and again in the case of Spain, displayed her readiness to pay for the success of the cause which she had been foremost in advocating. After a year of unexampled distress, when her own citizens had suffered unprecedented reverses, she devoted £400,000 to the purpose of removing the scruples of the Spanish monarchy.

Grant for new churches.

The third exceptional addition which was made to the expenditure of the year was agreed to at the time almost with unanimity, but will be regarded with different views by the present generation. The ministry imagined that the disturbances which troubled the country in 1817 were attributable to its irreligious condition; and that the provision of a greater number of churches would improve the disposition of the people. There can be no doubt whatever that the church accommodation in the larger towns was insufficient for the requirements of the population. Parishes which had 4000 inhabitants and upwards contained an aggregate population of 2,947,698 people; and they had only church room for 419,193 persons. Other parishes whose population exceeded 2000 persons contained 4,659,786 people; but they had only church room for 949,222. The more populous parishes, therefore, had church room for only one person in

every seven; the smaller parishes had church room for only one person in every five. No one who had the interests of the Church at heart could be satisfied with this state of things. But a good many people, interested in the welfare of the Church, might very reasonably have doubted what the Government of the country had to do with it. Most persons are now of opinion that Parliament has no concern with the church accommodation of the people, and that the various sects into which the nation is divided should be left to build their own places of worship. This conclusion, however, had not been generally formed in 1818. The Church of England was, at that time, the Church of the State in the strict sense of the term; and the men who controlled the destinies of the State thought that they could not do better than enlarge the influence of the Church. The ministry proposed that £1,000,000 should be granted by Parliament for the purpose of building new churches. The grant, it was thought, would be increased by local contributions, and it was estimated that 100 new churches could thus be constructed. The policy was, in one sense, successful. The populous suburb of Chelsea led the way with the construction of St. Luke's, and other parishes rapidly availed themselves of the liberality of Parliament. But the results of the policy will hardly recommend it to the approval of the present generation The accommodation which was required by the Church ought not to have been provided out of the funds of the State, and the provision should not at any rate have been made at a time when the country was overburdened with debt, and only slowly recovering from a period of unprecedented distress. The Church itself and the contributions of her children should have supplied the funds which she required, and men of other sects and other creeds should not have been taxed for the purpose of enlarging the usefulness of the Church of England.[1]

The religious difficulty, however, which in later times has agitated the world, had not arisen in 1818. The Prime

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xxxvii pp 1116–1131 *Ann. Reg.*, 1818, Chron., pp 33, 77, and ibid, 1820, Chron, p 189.

Minister boldly stated his desire to abate Dissent; and his statement only elicited from Lord Holland a feeble protest that Dissent was no evil, and the expression of a faint hope that he should never see it extinguished. The Opposition speakers, instead of discussing the principle on which the measure was based, addressed themselves to the subsidiary point whether the churches which were built under the grant should or should not be ornamental edifices. Thus proposed and thus criticised, the measure was, of course, adopted. The £1,000,000 which was required was readily voted. Fresh influence was added to the overpowering authority of the Church of England; and Nonconformists and Roman Catholics, stripped of all power, saw themselves taxed for the support of the dominant Church.[1]

The £1,000,000 for the new churches was raised by Exchequer bills. The grant did not, therefore, directly affect the expenditure of the year. Excluding this sum, the expenditure stood at rather more than £68,000,000.[2] The normal income of the year was estimated at £52,500,000; the deficit accordingly exceeded £15,500,000 The deficit, however, was, as usual, only nominal, and could have been removed by the termination of the Sinking Fund, which amounted to more than £15,000,000.[3] The Sinking Fund, therefore, absorbed almost the exact sum by which the expenditure exceeded the income of the year. Its suspension, or termination, would have at once established an equilibrium in the National Balance Sheet.

During the remainder of the summer the trade of the country continued to prosper. In closing the session the Regent was able to assure the legislature that the revenue was "in a course of continued improvement." "The im

[1] Yonge's *Liverpool*, vol. ii. p. 366

[2] See *ante*, p. 387 *note*, where the expenditure is given as £67,351,737. In addition to this sum, £400,000 had been granted on account of the Spanish Treaty, and £337,000 on account of arrears.

[3] The Sinking Fund on the permanent debt amounted to £14,832,467, the Sinking Fund on the unfunded debt to £560,000. The entire Sinking Fund, therefore, reached £15 392,467

provement in the internal circumstances of the country," he went on to say, "is happily manifest, and promises to be progressive;" and he felt "a perfect assurance that the continued loyalty and exertions of all classes of his Majesty's subjects will confirm these growing indications of national prosperity by promoting obedience to the laws and attachment to the constitution from which all our blessings have been derived." The improvement in the internal circumstances of the country and the continued loyalty of all classes must have been especially welcome to the Government at this juncture. The Parliament of 1812 had existed for six years, and the time was, therefore, arrived when its dissolution could not be much longer delayed. The session was brought to a close on the 10th of June, and Parliament was immediately dissolved. The dissolution would probably have occurred at a rather earlier period if the session had not been prolonged by an unexpected difficulty.

The Alien Act.

During the continuance of the war the ministry had demanded, and the legislature had given it power, to remove aliens who might become the objects of suspicion from the limits of the United Kingdom. The power was renewed in 1814 for a further period of two years; in 1816 it was again renewed for a similar term. The renewal was not granted at that time, however, without considerable opposition. In 1818, when the same power was again applied for, the bill in which it was demanded was strenuously contested. The Whigs endeavoured to resist its introduction, they met it with a direct negative at every stage; and they attempted to limit its scope in committee. But their efforts were vain. The voting power of the Government ensured it success on every division; and the Opposition was only able to delay a measure which it was not strong enough to defeat. When, however, the struggle had been apparently concluded, it was unexpectedly revived by a singular circumstance. The ministry accidentally discovered that, by an old Act of the Parliament of Scotland, all foreigners who had acquired a certain amount of Stock in the Bank of Scotland

became naturalised subjects, and they learned that a good many foreigners had lately purchased this Stock. They, therefore, decided on adding a clause to the Alien Bill in the House of Lords, declaring that no foreigner who had purchased such Stock since the previous 28th of April, or who should in future do so, should thereby be naturalised.[1] The House of Lords immediately agreed to the proposal of the Government, and the bill, with this addition to it, was returned to the Commons. Here, however, a new difficulty arose. A naturalised foreigner had the right to import commodities into the country at lower rates of duty than other foreigners. A clause, therefore, which denaturalised a British subject was, in effect, a money clause, and could not be introduced in the House of Lords. The House of Commons had very little sympathy for the unfortunate foreigners, but it had a great respect for its own privileges. It declined to accept the clause, and the ministry had to give way. But, though ministers were compelled to abandon their clause, they decided on introducing a fresh bill to effect their object. The scope of the new bill was, however, much smaller than that of the clause. The clause had been retrospective, the bill was only prospective. The clause would have lasted for two years; the bill was only to last for a little more than nine months. Limited in its extent and duration, the bill passed through all its stages in both Houses of Parliament in only two days—the 8th and 9th of June.[2] On the following afternoon the Regent came down to Westminster and dissolved the Parliament.

The general election

The general election of 1818 was fought with unusual bitterness on both sides. The late Parliament was unpopular; the ministry was unpopular; and the Opposition used the greatest efforts to turn this unpopularity to good account. More than half the entire seats were, indeed, at the disposal either of the Government or of some wealthy individual. In more than half the constituencies,

[1] *Hansard*, vol xxxviii pp. 1016–1035.

[2] *Hansard*, vol. xxxviii. pp. 1266, 1296, 1313. Romilly, vol iii pp 344, 355.

therefore, a contest was practically impossible. But, notwithstanding this circumstance, upwards of one hundred contested elections were fought. "It is said that there will be one hundred contests, and that Government will lose twenty or thirty members," wrote Greville in the remarkable diary which he was just commencing.[1] The most memorable struggles were in Westmoreland, in Westminster, and in the City. In Westmoreland, Brougham attempted to wrest the county from the Lowthers; but he was compelled to retire on the fourth day of the contest. In Westminster, Romilly succeeded in being returned at the head of the poll; and Sir Francis Burdett, the leader of the Radical party in the House of Commons, retained the second seat after a severe contest with Sir Murray Maxwell, the ministerial candidate. Maxwell was so roughly handled by the mob that his life was endangered. Nor did the ministry merely fail to win a seat in Westminster. It lost its representative in the City. Sir William Curtis had sat for the City for twenty-eight years. But on this occasion he was unable to retain his seat, and the four Opposition candidates were returned. The ministry was naturally disheartened at these reverses. The Opposition was proportionately elated. The Government admitted a loss of fourteen seats, the Opposition claimed a gain of twenty-three seats in England alone. Tierney himself declared that the ranks of the regular Opposition had been increased from 140 to 173 members.[2]

But though the dissolution had the effect of increasing its numerical strength, the Opposition had sustained losses which its increased voting power only imperfectly supplied. Few political parties had ever been deprived in so short a period of so many powerful debaters. At the close of the great war the four most prominent leaders of the Opposition in the House of Commons were Ponsonby, Whitbread, Tierney, and Romilly. The two most rising men

Gaps in the Opposition ranks.

[1] Greville, vol. i. p. 2.

[2] Greville, vol. i p 4 Romilly, vol. iii. p. 360. Buckingham's *Regency*, vol ii pp 265–268

among its younger members were Brougham and Horner. Four out of these six men died in the next three years. The death of Ponsonby occurred in 1817; and Ponsonby's place was in one sense more than filled by Tierney, whose long Parliamentary experience and whose efficiency in debate made him a peculiarly useful leader. But there was this difference between Ponsonby and Tierney: Ponsonby was a leader under whom the entire Opposition had agreed to serve. Tierney's lead was never tolerated by Lord Grenville's followers. Ponsonby's death, therefore, was the direct cause of bringing into stronger relief the differences which existed between Lord Grenville and Lord Grey, between Brougham and Tierney. The year before Ponsonby died, a rare disease, affecting the brain and causing excruciating torture, drove Whitbread into the temporary delusion which induced him to terminate his honourable career by his own hand. Soon after the general election of 1818, the death of an affectionate and beloved wife, occurring at a period when his own brain was overworked, produced the catastrophe which closed Sir. S. Romilly's existence. A few months before, Horner, the champion of the ultra-Bullionists, died at Pisa. The Opposition might almost doubt whether the gain of thirty or forty seats compensated them for the premature loss of four such men as Ponsonby, Whitbread, Romilly, and Horner. Ministers might at least congratulate themselves that, if they had more enemies to meet in the Lobby, they had fewer debaters to contend with in the House.

Throughout the whole of the autumn the increasing prosperity of the country pointed to the approach of happier times. The trade of 1818 was singularly prosperous; the value of the British exports reached the highest figure—£41,960,000—which they had ever attained. There were one-third fewer bankruptcies in England than had occurred in the preceding year. The price of Consols throughout the year was steady. Wheat, which had averaged 85*s.* 3*d.* in January 1818, was quoted at 79*s* 6*d.* in January 1819. All these circumstances augured well for the

Prospects of increased prosperity.

future, and the improvement to which they seemed to point was observed by independent persons. "I cannot resist," so Lord Sheffield wrote to Lord Sidmouth,[1] "the pleasure of communicating the very satisfactory accounts which I have received from different parts of the state of trade and manufactures, and particularly from the neighbourhood of Birmingham, Warwickshire, and Staffordshire. Both trade and manufactures are in a flourishing condition, and likely to improve still further." The improvement in trade was reflected in the condition of the revenue, and the Regent, in opening the new Parliament on the 19th of January 1819, had the "gratification of announcing a considerable and progressive improvement of the revenue." He had "the greatest pleasure in being able to inform" the legislature "that the trade, commerce, and manufactures of the country are in a most flourishing condition," and he felt justified in inferring from these premises that "the favourable change which has so rapidly taken place in the internal circumstances of the United Kingdom affords the strongest proof of the solidity of its resources."[2]

It was not, however, the first occasion on which the Regent had congratulated the legislature on the improved prospects of the country. Only three years before, in almost precisely similar language, he had spoken of "the flourishing condition of the commerce, manufactures, and resources" of the kingdom. Yet the boast of 1816 had been followed by a year of distress, and there were some reasons for fearing that the expectations of 1819 were likely to be falsified by a similar disappointment. The ministers, when they met Parliament, discovered that their supporters in the country were dreading another commercial crisis. The representatives of the manufacturing constituencies were already predicting fresh difficulties. Complaints were heard from Leeds, from Carlisle, and from the Black Country of dulness in the coal and cloth trades. Large numbers of working men, unable to obtain employment, were

[1] Sidmouth, vol. iii. p 242.
[2] *Hansard*, vol xxxix. p 9. *Ann. Reg*, vol. lxi p. 3.

emigrating to America; and it was almost everywhere felt that the improvement in the commercial operations of the country, which had formed so gratifying a feature in the history of the previous year, was checked.[1]

Resumption of cash payments.

The first indication of danger, however, came from another source. The Bank of England had, for more than twenty years, been permitted to issue an inconvertible currency; but it had been expressly stipulated that cash payments should be resumed within six months after the termination of the war. The country had now been for nearly four years at peace, and cash payments had not been resumed. Some persons were beginning to doubt the propriety and possibility of resuming them.

The suspension of cash payments had not, indeed, been tolerated in silence by the economists of the day. For nearly twenty years a controversy had been conducted upon the subject with great ability and great spirit by the advocates of a paper currency on the one side, and the ultra-bullionists on the other. A Mr. Boyd, at the close of 1800, addressed a letter to Pitt, ascribing the fall in the exchanges and the rise in the price of provisions to the excessive issues of Bank of England notes. Boyd was answered by Sir Francis Baring and Henry Thornton. Thornton's tract formed the subject of an article by Horner in one of the first numbers of the *Edinburgh Review*; and Lord King, a year afterwards, followed up Horner's article with his "Thoughts on the Effects of the Bank Restriction." In the meanwhile the causes which had led to the controversy were rapidly subsiding Nobody ever attracted notice by flogging a dead horse, and the currency question for the time became practically lifeless. It had been forced into notice by the rise in the exchanges and the increasing value of gold in 1800; it ceased to interest the public when the price of gold steadily fell. From 1801 to 1808 there was no appreciable difference between the value of gold and the value of Bank paper. "The price of gold did not exceed £4, being a depreciation of between two and three per cent.

[1] *Ann Reg*, vol lxi, Chron, pp. 27, 36.

Even this small difference, which, in a practical point of view, is hardly worth mentioning, would not have existed if the Bank had not needlessly held out £4 as its minimum price for all the gold that might be offered."[1]

In 1808 the war took a new course. Britain, for the first time, sent a considerable expedition to the Continent. Wellington landed in Spain, and the Peninsular campaign, after a short interval occasioned by the Convention of Cintra, began. About the same time the full effects of the commercial policy of the French and British Governments became clear. France declared that any vessel trading with the British Islands should be lawful prize. Britain retaliated by deciding that the Continent should have no trade except that which came to it through this country. The merchandise which Britain imported was stored up in British warehouses, and every payment which Britain had to make on the Continent was made in gold. It was much easier to smuggle gold than to smuggle goods. Napoleon was able to prevent our introducing merchandise, but was unable to prevent the importation of bullion.[2] Thus England, in consequence of the Orders in Council, had to make all her payments on the Continent in gold, and not in goods. At the same period the commencement of the Peninsular campaign increased the drain upon her resources, and drew away large supplies of bullion for the purposes of the war.

Causes which raised the value of gold after 1808

These two causes alone would probably have accounted for the rapid rise in the price of gold in 1808. But a third coexisted with them. While the demand for gold was steadily increasing, the usual supply of gold was suddenly stopped. At the commencement of the present century Europe depended for its supply of gold on the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of South America. But the disorders which broke out in these countries at the commencement of the second decade

[1] Tooke's *History of Prices from* 1839 *to* 1847, p. 92

[2] See letter of Mr. J. D Hume, quoted by Tooke, *Hist of Prices from* 1839 *to* 1847, p. 107

of the century suddenly reduced the supply which they had previously furnished. An increase in the demand had already raised the price of bullion and depreciated the value of Bank paper. The failure of the supply aggravated the difficulty. From 1803 to 1810 gold had remained at an uniform price of £4 an ounce. In 1810 its average price rose to £4, 10s.[1] The circumstance immediately attracted considerable attention. Amidst the excitement produced by it Ricardo published his first pamphlet, "The High Price of Gold a Proof of the Depreciation of Bank Notes," and a few months afterwards Horner moved for and obtained the appointment of the famous Bullion Committee.[2] The committee recommended the resumption of cash payments at the end of two years; and in 1811 Horner, its chairman and guiding spirit, moved a series of resolutions in pursuance with the recommendations of the report. He was met by Vansittart, who was at that time an independent member, acting with the small band of men who followed the fortunes of Lord Sidmouth, but gave a general support to Perceval's Administration. Vansittart's resolutions affirmed the doctrine "that the promissory notes of the Bank of England have hitherto been, and are at this time held to be, equivalent to the legal coin of the realm." His conclusion in this respect has been "a standing topic of ridicule ever since."[3] But Vansittart's resolutions did something more than affirm an untenable and ludicrous doctrine. They stated distinctly the inexpediency and danger of fixing "a definite period for the removal of the restriction of cash payments at the Bank of England, prior to the term already fixed . . . of six months after the conclusion of a definitive period of peace."[4] The necessities of the war made it impossible to resume cash payments, and the conclusion of peace must, therefore, precede their resumption. Such was the basis of Vansittart's opposition to Horner. Perceval, as Prime Minister, supported him

The Bullion controversy in 1810.

[1] McCulloch, ad verb. "Bank of England."
[2] Tooke, *Hist of Prices from* 1839 *to* 1847, p. 97
[3] Ibid., p. 99. [4] *Hansard*, vol. xx. p. 65.

on this ground. The expediency of the decision has been frequently questioned; but its propriety has been affirmed by the calmest intellect by which it has yet been reviewed. "Taking a careful and impartial view of the circumstances of those times, I cannot but think," wrote Tooke, "that the Government and the House of Commons were right in negativing the resolution, making it imperative on the Bank to pay in gold at the end of two years"[1]

Vansittart's victory assured the continued suspension of cash payments during the war; the conduct of his opponents forced the Government to go further. Up to 1811 payments in cash had been suspended at the Bank of England; but the Bank paper had never been made legal tender Bank paper had been practically accepted in all the ordinary transactions of life; and its acceptance had been so general that Vansittart had laid down the proposition that it was equivalent to the legal coin of the realm. The affirmation of this proposition by a considerable majority in the House of Commons elicited a remarkable rejoinder. Lord King, who had won his spurs as a young man by his "Thoughts on the Effects of the Bank Restriction," gave all his tenants notice that his rents were in future to be paid "either in gold or in paper estimated by the price of gold." Lord King's conduct in this respect was defended by the ultra-bullionists of the time, and has been applauded by the ultra-bullionists of a later generation. But prudent thinkers have hardly endorsed this view of the subject If Lord King had been allowed to carry out his views, there must have been a gold price and a paper price for every single commodity. "I apprehend," says Tooke, "that it would have been quite impossible that two prices could have been allowed to subsist—a gold price and a paper price. The inconveniences and anomalies attending such a state of things would have been innumerable, and among these not the least would have been an increased difficulty in the eventual return to cash payments."[2] The ministry was, therefore, forced by Lord King's declaration to

Bank paper made legal tender

[1] Tooke, *Hist. of Prices from* 1839 *to* 1847, p. 114. [2] Ibid., p. 117.

make bank-notes legal tender. It supported a bill brought in by Lord Stanhope for the purpose, which was rapidly carried through both houses. Lord King's notice had thus the effect of proving the fallacy of the doctrine which Vansittart had laid down, and of compelling the ministry to make bank paper legal tender. It had practically no other effect whatever.

Value of gold after 1811

During the next four years the price of gold continued to rise. Its average price in 1812 rose to £4, 15*s.* 6*d.*, in 1813 to £5, 1*s.*, and in 1814 to £5, 4*s.* per ounce. After 1814, however, the circumstances which had led to this rise in prices were removed and the value of gold began to fall. The average price throughout 1815 and 1816 fell to £4, 13*s.* 6*d.* an ounce.[1] "In October 1816 it had fallen to £3, 18*s.* 6*d.*; and that it had not fallen to the Mint price (£3, 17*s.* 10½*d.*) was only because the Bank had fixed this as its minimum rate"[2] "Gold was flowing in largely, and the bullion in the bank had, by August 1817, reached the large amount, then without precedent, of £11,668,266 There can be no doubt that the Bank was then in a condition to have resumed cash payments."[3]

In the meanwhile, however, Parliament had been induced to postpone the resumption of cash payments until the 5th of July 1818. There was, therefore, no immediate obligation on the directors of the Bank to resort to any decisive measures, and they preferred to proceed tentatively and by gradual operations, with a view of ensuring, as they hoped, the ultimate resumption of payments in specie. With this view they issued a notice in January 1817 that they were prepared to pay "in cash all the one-pound and two-pound notes bearing date prior to January 1816. Finding little or no demand for cash in consequence of this notice, and their treasure having continued during the course of the year to increase to an amount far exceeding what it had ever reached, and with few exceptions bearing a larger proportion to the extent of their issues than it had

Partial return to cash payments in 1817

[1] McCulloch, ad verb. "Bank of England."
[2] Tooke, *Hist. of Prices from* 1839 *to* 1847, p. 130. [3] Ibid., p. 131.

ever borne before, the directors issued a second notice in September 1817 for the payment in cash of all notes bearing date before the 1st January in that year."[1] The directors had fair grounds for hoping that the second notice would occasion no greater strain on the resources of the Bank than the first. The country was regaining its prosperity; and it was naturally expected that the Bank would derive some advantage from the universal improvement. The causes which led to a contrary result cannot perhaps be stated with precision. The Convention of Aix-la-Chapelle, however, in the autumn of 1818, anticipated the period at which France was to be liberated from her foreign garrisons. In order to fulfil the conditions of the convention and to hasten the liberation of her territory, the French were compelled to raise some considerable loans, and a large portion of the money thus obtained was subscribed in this country. Russia and Austria were simultaneously entering the money market. Thus foreign loans were suddenly increasing the demand for money. Gold was sent out of the country, and the exchanges were depressed. Their depression led to a rise in the price of gold, which for a short time was quoted at £4, 3*s.* an ounce. The directors of the Bank, with this state of things before them, hesitated to comply with the law for the resumption of cash payments in the following July. The Government admitted the weight of their reasoning and afforded them a year of grace. By an Act of 1818 the restriction was continued to the end of the next session of Parliament.[2]

When Parliament met in 1819, it was no longer doubtful that the question of the return to cash payments must receive some definite settlement. The Opposition denounced the delays which had already taken place in dealing with it. The Bank itself demanded an inquiry into the whole subject, and preferred an elaborate investigation of its business to another short and temporary suspension of cash payments. The Government

Treatment of the currency question in 1819

[1] *Report of the Lords' Committee of* 1819, p. 3, quoted by Tooke, p 132

[2] Tooke, *Hist. of Prices from* 1839 *to* 1847, pp 132–134.

was compelled to act with decision, and its weakness in the new Parliament made decision absolutely necessary. Nothing, in fact, could be more pitiable than its position in the House of Commons. "The impression of the weakness of Government increases daily," wrote Fremantle to Lord Buckingham on the 9th of February; "and the unity and strength of the Opposition of course improves" Government is "so completely paralysed that they dare do nothing, and it becomes a Government of Committees of the House of Commons." "It is difficult," wrote Charles Wynn,[1] "to describe to you the daily increasing appearances of weakness in the Government, which are such as, if I had not seen all I have seen during some years past, would make me think it quite impossible that they should go on for a month. They evidently have no hold on the House."[2] The weakness of the Government, moreover, was not only observable by experienced witnesses like Fremantle and Wynn; the Opposition was able to prove its power in the division list. Secret committees were appointed in both Houses to consider the state of the Bank of England. The Opposition endeavoured to add Brougham's name to the House of Commons Committee, and was only defeated by 175 votes to 133.[3] It actually defeated the ministry on one point, and compelled it to give way on another relating to the settlement of the King's establishment —a subject which will be dealt with in more detail in another chapter. Reverses similar to those with which the session had thus begun continued throughout it. Grattan brought forward the claims of the Roman Catholics, and carried his motion by 243 votes to 241, or by a majority of 2. Sir James Mackintosh moved for a Committee on the Reform of the Criminal Law; and his proposal was adopted by 147 votes to 128, or by a majority of 19; and Lord Archibald Hamilton drew attention to the condition of the Scottish municipalities; and his motion for their reform was carried by 149 votes to 144,

[1] Fremantle sat with Sir J. Nugent for Lord Buckingham's borough of Buckingham, Charles Wynn for Montgomeryshire.

[2] Duke of Buckingham's *Regency*, vol. ii. pp. 300, 301, 302.

[3] *Hansard*, vol. xxxix. p. 358.

or by a majority of 5. These adverse divisions startled the Government into action. The Prime Minister himself doubted the possibility of remaining in office. "If we cannot carry what has been proposed," he wrote to the Chancellor, "it is far, far better for the country that we should cease to be the Government. . . . A strong and decisive effort can alone redeem our character and credit, and is as necessary for the country as it is for ourselves."[1] The question of currency reform was the question of the hour. Liverpool's decision forbade its further postponement.

It has already been stated that secret committees had been appointed in both Houses "to consider the state of the Bank of England, with reference to the expediency of the resumption of cash payments at the period fixed by law."[2] The House of Commons committee chose for its chairman a comparatively young and inexperienced statesman, who was destined to prove the first financier of his time. Robert Peel was the eldest son of the first baronet of the same name. His father, like his great contemporaries Hargreaves and Arkwright, began life in humble circumstances, and by the force of his own industry and abilities raised himself to affluence. He had the discrimination, at a very early period, to appreciate the talents of his son, and he had the good sense to give him an excellent education Young Peel thoroughly justified his father's opinion of him. He took high honours at Oxford, and was almost immediately afterwards brought into Parliament. The ministry, in those days, was always on the look-out for rising talent, and Perceval, who had just formed his Administration, asked young Peel to second the address. Sir Robert was gratified at the minister's selection of his son, and wrote Perceval a letter of thanks which it is hardly possible to read now without a smile. "If," said Sir Robert, "he (his son) has the good fortune to be honoured with your confidence, I flatter myself he will be found deserving of the trust reposed in him He

Mr Peel

[1] Twiss's *Eldon*, vol ii p 329 *Hansard*, vol xxxix pp. 213, 275.
[2] *Ann. Reg*, 1819, Hist, pp 33, 42.

possessses capacity, industry, and virtuous habits; and, under the guidance of a judicious and well-informed friend, he may become a useful member of society." Most people will think that the second Sir Robert Peel did something more than become a useful member of society. He acquitted himself so well in 1810 that room was almost immediately found for him in a subordinate office in the ministry. On Wellesley Pole's retirement in 1813, Peel was promoted to the difficult and anxious post of Chief Secretary for Ireland, and in that capacity it became his duty to conduct the Irish legislation of the Government. The retirement, in 1817, of Abbot, the first Lord Colchester, from the Speakership, brought Peel into even greater prominence. Abbot had represented the University of Oxford, and Canning was anxious to succeed him as member for the University. Canning, however, was disposed to regard the claims of the Roman Catholics with favour; and uncompromising Tories like Lord Eldon and his brother, Sir W. Scott, the remaining member for the University, were determined to prevent the election of any member with Catholic sympathies Their prejudices prevailed: Canning's name was unfavourably received; and Peel, still young and comparatively obscure, was preferred to him Two years afterwards Peel retired from the Chief Secretaryship. The causes which led to his resignation were never thoroughly explained; but it is probable that they were partly due to his dislike of an irksome office,[2] and partly attributable to the Oxford election. Peel did not conceal his dislike of Canning's conduct and policy; Canning was "out of heart" at the growing powers of Peel.[3] Peel retired; and he was, therefore, out of office at the commencement of 1819. The Government wisely selected him as the chairman of the secret committee appointed to inquire into the affairs of the Bank.

Peel professed that he had "formed no opinion" on the currency question, and that he was "open to conviction."

[1] Perceval, *Memoirs*, vol ii. p. 58.

[2] See on this point the *Croker Memoirs*, vol. i p. 114. M Guizot in his *Memoir of Peel* says, "Le sejour de l'Irelande lui était insupportable."

[3] Liverpool, vol ii p. 376.

Yet it is probable that the ministry imagined that his judgment would ultimately incline to the continued suspension of cash payments. His father, Sir Robert, was known to be a strong anti-bullionist, and Peel was suspected of sharing his father's opinions. He had voted against Horner's resolutions in 1811, and he afterwards avowed that he went into the committee with a very different opinion from that which he ultimately formed. But the proceedings in the committee induced him to entirely change his views. He was led to concur in the principles laid down in Horner's resolutions and to advocate the expediency of returning to cash payments. His influence with the committee was so great that the other members were readily induced to adopt his opinions. A return to cash payments was agreed to, and the means of renewing payments in cash alone remained for consideration. The excellent position of the Bank facilitated this object.[1] The committee recommended that the Bank should be gradually repaid a sum of £10,000,000 which it had advanced to the Government; and that the resumption of cash payments should be effected by four distinct processes. After the 1st of February 1820, the Bank was to deliver on demand gold of standard fineness at the rate of £4, 1*s.* per oz, in quantities of not less than 60 oz. After the 1st of October 1820, it was to deliver gold at the rate of £3, 19*s* 6*d.* per oz.; and after the 1st of May 1821, at the rate of £3, 17*s* 10½*d.* per oz. From the 1st of May 1823, the Bank was to pay its notes in the legal coin of the realm The principle, then, which the committee enforced was to compel the Bank to pay bullion, not coin, for large quantities of its paper, at rates diminishing from time to time till they attained the Mint price of gold. The House of Commons unanimously assented to the resolutions which were founded on the reports of the committee. Bills founded on these resolutions were introduced and passed without material amendment; and the Bank, anticipating the decision of the committee, ultimately

Resumption of cash payments carried

[1] The liabilities of the Bank on the 30th of January 1819 amounted to £33,894,580, its assets to £39,096,900.

succeeded in paying cash for its notes, of whatever amount, after the 1st of May 1821.[1]

Importance of the decision

The resumption of cash payments is perhaps the most important incident in the financial history of the present century. The return to a metallic standard was universally agreed to at the time; a departure from a metallic standard would not be tolerated now Yet there are hundreds of people who probably still believe that the Act of 1819 inflicted injury on the country, and that the distress and disorders, which unhappily made that year memorable, were, in some way or other, attributable to it. The world derives its knowledge of the early history of the century from the pages of Alison; and Alison was, unfortunately, convinced of the supreme wisdom of Pitt's Sinking Fund, and impressed with the extreme folly of the Act of 1819. The constant dropping of the softest water will wear away the hardest rock; the constant iteration of the same fallacy will make an impression on the most unimpressionable intellect. The world owes much to Alison for his account of the Revolutionary struggle, and it is legitimate to regret that his erroneous views on finance should have depreciated the value of his later history

Money.

Men often apparently differ from one another when their differences are really due to their using words in different senses. The legislature has found it necessary again and again to define the exact sense which it applies to the words it employs. It would be a good thing if all disputants were compelled to follow the same rule Men talk loosely of "money" and "currency," as if these words conveyed a meaning which did not admit of dispute. Yet it is impossible to determine whether there was a money famine in 1819 without first deciding what is meant by the term "money." Alison would never have fallen into the errors which his later work contains if he had begun by defining the meaning of the words which he used.

Alison imagined that a public institution, issuing under the authority of the State certain pieces of paper, called bank-

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xl pp. 152, 604, 676. *Ann. Reg*, 1819, Hist., p. 66.

notes, is able to extend the supply of money available for the use of the world. But, of course, it can do nothing of the kind. A bank-note is in reality the same thing as a cheque. It is an order made by the bank, just as a cheque is an order made by the drawer, to pay a definite sum of money to the holder thereof. The value of a cheque depends on the credit of the person who signs it; the value of a bank-note depends on the credit of the bank which issues it. If the person signing the cheque is known to be solvent, the cheque circulates as readily as gold. If the credit of the bank issuing the note is unimpeachable, its note circulates as readily as gold. Neither the cheque nor the note have any intrinsic value of their own. Their value depends on the credit of the person or bank whose name they bear. Bank notes and cheques are not, in other words, money, they are merely the convenient representatives of money.

The bank-note, then, like the cheque or the bill, is merely a promise to pay, either on demand or at some stated period, a definite sum of money. It is a pledge, written on an article of no value, for an article of great value. Money itself may consist of any valuable commodity; but it is essential that the commodity should be valuable. In advanced stages of society the precious metals have been uniformly the commodities used as money; and they are evidently the most suitable for the purpose. The value of the precious metals is less variable than that of any other commodity, it is the most easily ascertainable. These metals have therefore been selected by all civilised states as the commodities most suitable for use as money. But the production of the precious metals depends on the laws which govern the production of other like commodities They can only be won by the application of labour and capital. When they are so produced, they become a portion of the capital or stock in trade of the persons to whom they belong. Just as the corn merchant trades in corn, or the East India merchant in tea, or the West India merchant in sugar, so the bullion merchant trades in gold and silver. The man who buys gold and silver invests his capital in bullion;

the man who sells gold and silver sells so much of his capital. Most men, indeed, retain a certain portion of capital, either at their banker's or in their pockets, as money for immediate use. It is the object of a banker to employ the capital which his customers thus leave in his hands. A bank, in short, derives its profits from employing the unemployed capital of its customers.

Thus a man's money is a portion of his capital. So long as he has the money at his disposal, it is immaterial to his creditors whether he pay them in gold or by a cheque, which they may exchange for gold. The customers of the Bank are in the same position as the creditors of the individual. A bank-note, which may at any moment be exchanged for £5, is accepted as readily as £5 For a great many purposes paper is even more convenient than gold If a man take a hundred thousand sovereigns from the Bank and send them to Australia, he will have to pay for the carriage of a bulky parcel; he will run the risk of losing a valuable commodity, and the mere friction of the coins with each other will slightly reduce their value by the end of the journey If a man send a bill of exchange or a cheque for the same amount, he will incur little or no expense for its carriage, he will run no risk of losing a valuable commodity, and the cheque or the bill will lose none of its value during transit. The use of paper as the representative of money minimises the waste of bullion, reduces the risk of its loss, and facilitates every commercial transaction. Paper, then, cannot be too largely used as the symbol of money; but it cannot be too clearly remembered that the paper so used is not money, but merely the representative of money, for which it may at any moment be exchanged.

Such is the state of things when paper is employed in every commercial transaction for money, and when that paper is exchangeable at the will of the holder for gold. Very different is the state of things when paper is not exchangeable for gold, or when cash payments are, in other words, suspended. Then the paper of the Bank is not taken because it is exchangeable for gold, but because its customers have confidence

in the ultimate solvency of the institution. When the operations of its customers are confined to transactions with people intimately acquainted with the solvency of the Bank, the Bank paper circulates at about par. When they have occasion to deal with distant countries, inspired possibly with a distrust of paper, with which they have only a slight acquaintance, the Bank paper falls in value, and the relative price of gold rises. The value of the paper does not necessarily depend on its contraction or on its expansion, but on the purposes to which it is applied. A large foreign expenditure reduces the price of paper, because foreigners regard paper with distrust. A busy internal trade does not reduce the value of paper, because the parties using it have faith in the stability of the Bank. "Whenever," said Tooke, writing of the period during which cash payments were suspended, "there was a pause or cessation of the unusually large foreign expenditure by the Government, or of unusually large importations of corn, there was also a tendency to a restoration of the value of the paper, by a rise in the exchanges, without any contemporaneous or immediately preceding reduction in the amount of bank-notes." And again: "Without committing myself to the assertion that the price of gold invariably rose and fell with the extent of the Government demand for coin and bullion for remittances, I may observe that during the four years (1813–1816) there is a very close correspondence between the magnitude of the Government purchases and the published market prices."[1]

It is evident, therefore, that when cash payments are suspended any extensive dealings with other countries tend to depreciate the price of paper, and that the price of paper rises and falls with the expansion and contraction of such transactions. But every rise and fall in the value of paper currency imposes inconvenience on the country which is compelled to use it. The precious metals are admirably adapted for use as money, because they are subject to comparatively slight variations of value. The inconvertible paper notes of a bank

Inconveniences attending the rise and fall of paper

[1] Tooke, *Hist. of Prices from* 1839 *to* 1847, pp 132, 124.

supply the place of money imperfectly, because, among other reasons, the value which is nominally attached to them is constantly changing. What would be thought of a state of society in which the yard measure at one time contained 36 inches and at another only 23; or in which a ton of coals at one time consisted of 20 cwts. and at another of only 12? Yet just as much difficulty arises from a variation in the standard of value as would arise from a variation in the standards of measure and of weight. An accurate settlement of all these standards is one of the first duties of civilised society.

Constant fluctuations in value are the consequence of an inconvertible paper currency. The value of the paper issues of the Bank of England was exposed to considerable fluctuations between 1810 and 1820 For this reason alone the suspension of cash payments had become an intolerable inconvenience, and a return to specie transactions indispensable. But though it was necessary for the Government to insist on the resumption of cash payments, there can be no doubt that considerable embarrassments resulted from its decision. It is impossible to degrade the currency of a state without inflicting a heavy loss on every creditor in the country. Debts are paid in notes bearing the names attached to the old coins, but retaining only a portion of their value. But, when the currency of a state is depreciated, it is equally impossible to restore it to its former value without inflicting a loss on every debtor in the community. Debts incurred when a pound was really only worth fifteen shillings have to be paid in the new pound which is worth twenty For this reason it is probably desirable for a community which has had the misfortune to have had recourse to issues of inconvertible paper to resume cash payments by gradual processes, and to contract its inconvertible currency by degrees. The change in the value of the currency takes place in this way more slowly, and debtors and creditors are able to arrange their mutual concerns without any serious loss or any great gain on either side. It is possible, in short, to question the propriety of any particular method

of resuming cash payments; but it is impossible to doubt that it should be the object of every community to resume them. The nation which deliberately retains an inconvertible paper currency prefers the risk of constant fluctuation in the money market to the certainty of one sharp crisis. The writer who proposes to defend the issue of inconvertible paper must be prepared to show that a fixed standard of value is not as necessary as fixed standards of weight and measure.

It is impossible to doubt the prudence of the decision which induced the Government in 1819 to return to cash payments. The Act of 1819 effected the termination of an exceptional state of things, which had only been tolerable from the circumstances which had led to it. Had the suspension of cash payments continued, fluctuations must have again occurred in the value of bank paper; and each of these fluctuations must have involved a crisis ruinous in its consequences to some class of persons. The Act of 1819 placed the commerce of the country on a sounder basis. The standard of value no longer varied with every rise and fall of the political barometer, but was exempt from every variation except that slow and gradual change which, it is possible, is occurring in the value of gold. But there is another reason for which the Act of 1819 may be remembered with gratitude. A nation returning to cash payments may select either gold or silver as the standard of value, or it may establish what is called a bi-metallic currency, and allow gold and silver to be equally legal tender. In deciding that gold should be the sole standard of value, the framers of the Act of 1819 conferred a benefit on posterity which it was almost impossible to foresee at the time. It was obvious, indeed, that it was impossible to predict that the relative value of two metals, produced in different places and under different circumstances, would always remain unchanged. But experience favoured the assumption that a pound of gold would always be worth about fifteen and a half pounds of silver; and a rapid fall in the value of silver could not have been foreseen. More than half a century after the Act of 1819, a variety of circumstances

Selection of gold as the sole standard of value

contributed to depreciate the value of silver; and in consequence to raise the relative value of gold. The inconveniences experienced by other countries, in which either bi-metallic money had been established, or silver had been made the sole standard of value, proved the foresight of our ancestors in resting our monetary system on one metal alone, and that metal the most valuable of all metals, gold.[1]

Huskisson's memorandum on finance

The decision to return to cash payments necessitated more than ordinary care in the financial arrangements of the year. The Government owed the Bank £10,000,000. Peel's committee had recommended that the debt should be paid, and the Bank required its payment in the course of the next two years Some caution was necessary on this account; and a much more important reason for deliberation was to be found in another circumstance. The leading members of the Opposition had already realised the fact that the financial system of the country was founded on a delusion. But the truth was only slowly stealing on the perceptions of the Government. Among the less prominent, but abler, members of the Liverpool Administration was William Huskisson. Born in 1770, brought into Parliament in 1796, he had been appointed at the close of the century to a subordinate office in Pitt's Ministry. In 1801 he had retired with Pitt; and, on Pitt's restoration to power in 1804, he had filled the office of Secretary to the Treasury. He resumed this situation under the Duke of Portland in 1807, but unfortunately found it necessary to withdraw his services from the Ministry on the retirement of Canning in 1809. Since 1814 he had occupied a newly-created and comparatively unimportant office as Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests and Land Revenue.[2] But though he was placed in an

[1] A good many of the Whigs and of other moderate politicians thought that the crisis might have been more easily tided over by making silver the legal standard, or by adopting a bi-metallic currency Ward raised the point in one of his letters to the Bishop of Llandaff, and Lord Lansdowne's opinions upon it will be found in the debate on the Duke of Richmond's motion, in February 1830.—*Hansard*, New Series, vol xxii. p. 991.

[2] Huskisson's *Memoir and Speeches*, vol. i. pp. 96–66.

unostentatious position, his financial knowledge, which far exceeded Vansittart's, was fully recognised by the ministry. His views, indeed, had little accord with those of his colleagues. Alone among the Tory ministry, Huskisson had accepted the truths of Adam Smith's gospel, and was prepared to act, as far as possible, on the principles of free trade. The single financier that England produced between the death of Pitt and the rise of Peel, it was his fate never to be employed in any high financial situation. The ministry preferred the routine errors of Vansittart to the novel truths which were being pressed on them by Huskisson.

At the commencement of the session of 1819, Huskisson forwarded to Liverpool a remarkable memorandum on the resumption of cash payments. He insisted in it on the necessity of a large reduction in the unfunded debt, and he dwelt on the method by which cash payments should be resumed. He went on to point out the errors of the course which the Chancellor of the Exchequer was pursuing. The "mystery of our financial system no longer deceives any one in the money market; selling Exchequer bills daily to redeem funded debt daily, then funding those Exchequer bills once a year, or once in two years, in order to go over the same ground again, whilst the very air of mystery, and the anomaly of large annual or biennial loans in times of profound peace, create uneasiness out of the market, and in foreign countries an impression unfavourable with respect to the solidity of our resources. In finance, expedients and ingenious devices may answer to meet temporary difficulties; but, for a permanent and peace system, the only wise course, either in policy or for impression, is a system of simplicity and truth."[1]

Such were the views which Huskisson propounded to his colleagues. He recommended that the Sinking Fund should be cancelled, and that the surplus income should alone be applicable to the redemption of the debt. The real surplus amounted to about £2,000,000. But as the Sinking Fund amounted to about £15,500,000, its maintenance converted

[1] Yonge's *Liverpool*, vol. ii p. 382

a real surplus of £2,000,000 into an apparent deficit of £13,500,000.

It so happened, moreover, that Vansittart in 1819 decided on funding £10,597,000 of unfunded debt. Neither the sum required for this purpose, nor the sum required for the Sinking Fund, could be raised except by borrowing; and Vansittart accordingly had to obtain in this way rather more than £24,000,000. He decided on raising one-half of this sum, or £12,000,000, in the ordinary way by a loan; the other moiety of £12,000,000 from the Sinking Fund. A new Sinking Fund was created on the money so borrowed, and solemn preparations were made for extinguishing on paper a debt which had no real and palpable existence. All Vansittart's efforts, however, to preserve the Sinking Fund could not hide the fact that the fund, or three-fourths of it, was being applied to the current services of the year. The fact was so plain, that Vansittart decided on attempting to increase the surplus by additional taxation. He persuaded the House of Commons to resolve "that to make such progressive reductions of the National Debt as may adequately support public credit, it is necessary that there should be a clear surplus of not less than £5,000,000, and that, with a view to the attainment of this object, it is expedient to increase the income of the country by the imposition of taxes to the amount of £3,000,000 per annum."[2]

Vansittart's financial policy.

It was exactly eight years since Vansittart had induced the House to affirm that the paper of the Bank of England was equivalent to the legal coin of the realm The resolution had been received with the ridicule which it had deserved; but it had fortunately proved only a harmless misstatement of a fact. The consequences of his new resolution were much more serious. Prudent men failed to see the necessity for maintaining the clear surplus of £3,000,000 which Vansittart insisted on preserving. They thought that no obligation was thrown upon the country except that of honestly paying its way, and

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xl. p. 1004.

[2] *Hansard*, vol xl. pp. 864, 912–974. *Ann Reg.*, 1819, Hist., p 90

that it was both unnecessary and dangerous to affirm that, in addition to doing so, it was necessary to reduce its mortgages by £5,000,000 annually. No doubt a surplus was eminently desirable, but it was a mere matter of degree, and therefore of opinion, whether it should amount to £5,000,000 or only £2,000,000. It could not be advisable to resort to additional taxation at a time when the country, just recovering from the distresses of previous years, was not in a position to assume new burdens

These objections to Vansittart's policy were increased by the vexatious nature of some of the taxes which he determined to impose. At the head of them stood a considerable increase to the malt tax, and an enormous addition to the duties on foreign wool. The woollen manufacture was one of the most important industries in the country; the manufacturers were largely dependent on foreign wool; their trade at the moment was declining, and Vansittart decided on raising the duty from 6*s* 8*d*. to 56*s* a cwt.[1] Such an increase would have been sufficiently deplorable if a deficient revenue had made it unavoidable. It seemed utterly unnecessary when, on the author's own showing, there was a clear surplus of £2,000,000 a year. "The consternation in the City is very great," wrote Wynn to Lord Buckingham. "Their outcry against Vansittart increases daily, and is quite universal."[2]

Before the decision of the ministry had been announced, the internal condition of the country was creating anxiety. A vast number of labourers was out of employment, and the Government seriously contemplated transplanting the surplus population to one of the British colonies. The unhappy workmen themselves desired to seek their fortune in the United States of America, but the ministry refused to assist them to emigrate to any country except a British colony. The colony which the ministry selected, the Cape of Good Hope, had only recently been formally ceded to

Internal distress and emigration

[1] McCulloch, ad verb "Wool" *Ann Reg.*, 1816, Hist., p. 91. The duty on Colonial wool was fixed at 1*d* a pound or 9*s*. 4*d*. a cwt.

[2] *Regency Memoirs*, vol ii p 327

the United Kingdom. The mildness of its climate and the fertility of its soil were supposed to make it a peculiarly eligible settlement for British workmen. The circumstance that it was situated on the direct route to India probably contributed to recommend it to the favourable notice of the Government. It accordingly offered to assist any intending emigrants to the Cape, and obtained a vote of £50,000 for the purpose.[1] The decision was timely, but the emigration of a few hundreds of persons could not make much impression on the supply of redundant labourers in an overstocked labour market. The existing distress continued, and the popular agitators, encouraged by it, renewed the designs which they had temporarily suspended. At the commencement of the year the Borough Reeve of Manchester was invited to summon a public meeting for the purpose of petitioning Parliament against the corn laws. The Borough Reeve refused, and an anonymous advertisement appeared announcing the meeting for the 18th of January. The meeting was held. Hunt, who presided at it, ridiculed the idea of petitioning Parliament, and prevailed on the meeting to agree on a remonstrance to the Regent. Nothing, however, came of the suggestion. For the next few months quiet continued to prevail and the peace of the country was not disturbed.

Reform movement.

As the summer, however, advanced, the depression of trade became more marked, and the agitation of the lower orders more serious. "The weavers" in Ayrshire, wrote Lord Cassilis to Lord Buckingham, "are literally starving; the utmost that an ordinary weaver can make per week is *2s. 7d.*, working from 14 to 16 hours in the day." "The state of Lancashire and its immediate neighbourhood," wrote the Prime Minister to Wellington, "is very alarming, and deserves serious consideration."[2] At the end of May it was found necessary to move troops to Carlisle, "in con-

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1819, Hist., p. 87. The grant does not seem to have been included in the Appropriation Act till 1821, when it was merged in a larger grant of £86,760.

[2] Buckingham's *Regency*, vol. ii. p 372. Wellington *Despatches*, vol. i. p. 76.

sequence of the riotous disposition of the weavers."[1] Numbers of colliers in the Black Country were thrown out of employment about the same time. The general want of work led to combinations among the workmen, and these unions were soon used for political purposes A reform of Parliament was demanded both by the Radical reformers in the country and by the Whig party in the House of Commons.

In the House of Commons

Lord Tavistock was the eldest son of the Duke of Bedford: the vast possessions to which he was heir gave him a stake in the country which it was impossible to ignore Long tradition had connected his family with the cause of enlightened advancement. Lord Tavistock disapproved of the wild and impracticable theories of the Radicals; but he desired to correct the abuses which had grown up in the Constitution. He presented a petition from 1800 respectable householders of Liverpool praying for representation Liverpool had two members, but its members were elected by so small a body of persons that the bulk of the population was practically unrepresented. The petition was received, and, immediately after its receipt, a very different man from Lord Tavistock rose to propose a scheme of Reform Sir Francis Burdett lived to change the principles which he professed during the earlier period of his political career; but, in 1819, he was the object of a political animosity which is almost incredible. His opinions were identified with those of Cobbett, Hunt, and others of the advanced Radical reformers. His conduct in 1810, in defying the authority of the House of Commons and in resisting the Speaker's warrant, had made him the darling of the mob, but had won for him the detestation of both the great political parties in the State. His popularity among the lower orders made him member for Westminster; but his victory at Westminster gained him no support in the House. Even Brougham loathed the prospect of supporting the Burdettites.[2]

Burdett, in 1819, rested his motion for Reform on the solid hypothesis that representation and taxation should go together.

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1819, Chron., pp 35, 36. [2] Brougham, vol. ii. p 341.

The country, he urged, was overburdened with taxation The manufacturers were indigent; the farmers on the verge of ruin; the labouring poor unable to subsist on their miserable wages. The agricultural classes maintained that they could not go on unless they were protected by heavy duties on foreign wool. The clothiers replied that their bankruptcy could only be arrested by the free admission of foreign wool and a heavy duty on foreign goods. Parliament could not move without incurring the risk of destroying some interest, and the only practicable course was to reduce the taxation under which all classes groaned. In the present corrupt state of the Government, however, neither Tories nor Whigs could succeed in effecting the economies without which remissions of taxation were impossible. A Reform of Parliament was therefore the necessary preliminary to a more economical administration; and Burdett asked the House to pledge itself to take the subject of the representation into its most serious consideration at the commencement of the next session The motion had the effect of eliciting from the Opposition benches some warm declarations in favour of a limited measure of Reform. But the voting power of the Reformers proved on a division small. They only mustered 58 votes to their opponents' 153. Not one-third of the House of Commons thought it even necessary to mark their interest in the question of Reform by their attendance at the division.[1]

In the country

Yet events were rapidly occurring outside the House which were forcing the question of Reform on the attention of the country. The rejection of Burdett's motion in the House of Commons was the signal for some singular proceedings. Huge Reform meetings were held at Smithfield, at Birmingham, at Leeds, at Stockport, and at other places; and at Birmingham the meeting was advised to take a novel course. Sir Charles Wolseley, a Staffordshire baronet imbued with the principles of Burdett, was elected Legislatorial Attorney[2] for

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1819, Hist., pp. 79–84

[2] This was done on the advice of old Major Cartwright, who was one of the persons prosecuted for the Birmingham election. Cartwright seems to have seen

the town. Some of the more ignorant of the populace, who cheered Wolseley's election, may have imagined that they had really succeeded in securing for themselves a representation in Parliament. Better informed persons might have been satisfied with treating the whole proceedings with contempt. The ministry, however, was not likely to regard acts of this character with indifference. More than a year afterwards some of the principal people concerned in Wolseley's election were prosecuted and convicted. Wolseley, full of his new dignity as member for Birmingham, attended a meeting at Stockport. He used on that occasion foolish, weak, but bombastic language, and, in company with a dissenting minister, Mr. Harrison, was arrested by a constable named Birch. Poor Birch, who, at any rate, had only done his duty, was shot by some Radical. Wolseley and Harrison were tried for sedition in the following April at the Cheshire assizes and were severely punished [1]

These meetings had necessarily created great anxiety in the public mind The only people who seemed to feel no anxiety were the ministers of the Crown. The country was in a critical condition, yet the members of the Cabinet were scattered through Europe. "With the exception of Liverpool, Castlereagh, Sidmouth, Wellington, Van, and myself," wrote Eldon, "they are all, eight in number, in different parts of Europe" [2] Yet events were hastening to a crisis with alarming rapidity. Manchester decided on following the example of Birmingham, and on electing a legislatorial attorney. A great meeting was called for the purpose on the 16th of August. In 1819 there was a small piece of land on the outskirts of Manchester, which has long since been absorbed by the growing city, but which was still unbuilt over. Building operations were indeed in progress in parts of it, and pieces of timber left by the builders

the absurdity of a town conferring a representative upon itself, and to have persuaded his friends to elect, not a member, but an attorney, who was to present their claim to the Speaker. He desired "to send a petition in form of a living man instead of one on parchment or paper."—*Life of Major Cartwright*, vol. ii. pp. 164–168.

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1819, Hist., p 105, ibid., 1820, Chron , pp. 148, 908–920, 958–961

[2] Eldon, vol. ii. p. 336

were scattered about it. Being in the immediate neighbourhood of St. Peter's Church, the land was known as St. Peter's Field. The incident to be immediately related gave it the name of Peterloo. It had been occasionally used by the Reformers for public meetings, and the Blanketeers had met upon it in 1817. It was decided that the meeting of the 16th of August should be held on this field. Every effort was made by its promoters to ensure its success. Hunt, the ostensible leader of the Radicals, was invited and consented to preside at it. The men who were to take part in the meeting underwent some preliminary drill, in order that they might be able to move on to the ground with some approach to military regularity; and banners, of all kinds and colours, were prepared to decorate the various processions. On the other hand, the authorities were equally vigilant; troops at their request were moved to Manchester; special constables were enrolled in great numbers for the preservation of the peace; and the Yeomanry of Lancashire and Cheshire were called out for service. The preparations on both sides were complete, and the event was awaited with anxiety by the authorities and the people

The Peterloo meeting.

The morning came, and the sun had hardly risen before the character of the demonstration was visible. From every suburb of Manchester, from every village within marching distance of the city, processions of working men were converging on the place of meeting Most of the processions moved under banners. On one of these was inscribed "Liberty or death!" on another, "We will conquer our enemies!" on a third, a huge black banner, "Equal representation or death!" on a fourth, "No corn laws!" on a fifth, "Hunt and liberty." The women shared the enthusiasm which seized their husbands and brothers; a female procession marched to the meeting. No serious disorders, however, took place on any of the roads by which St. Peter's Field was approached. The tradesmen took the precaution to close their shops; the upper classes probably forbore as a rule to venture into the streets; and from 50,000 to 60,000 men

marched into St. Peter's Field without committing any serious breach of the peace.

The county magistrates were, in the meanwhile, anxiously awaiting the event in a house belonging to a Mr. Buxton, which adjoined and overlooked the field. They had extended a line of constables from this house to the temporary hustings —some movable waggons—which had been placed in the centre of the ground. It was their obvious intention to maintain a line of communication between their own position and the leaders of the meeting. But the object was defeated by a simple expedient. The waggons which formed the hustings were moved into a different part of the field, and the communication between them and the magistrates was thus broken. At this moment Hunt was observed to commence his address to the crowd from the hustings Nadin, the chief constable of Manchester, was ordered to arrest him; but Nadin stated, what was evidently true, that it was impossible for him to do so. The magistrates therefore sent for the commanders of the Manchester Yeomanry and of the 15th Hussars, which were in readiness The Yeomanry arrived first, and suffered themselves to be scattered among the crowd, who closed on them, groaned and hissed, and waved their sticks in a menacing manner. Colonel L'Estrange, who commanded the Hussars, arrived immediately afterwards, and asked for orders. "Good God, sir," said Mr. Hulton, who presided over the magistrates, "do not you see how they are attacking the Yeomanry? Disperse the crowd." L'Estrange retired to his men The Hussars were pushed under his orders rapidly through the streets till they reached the south-west corner of the field, the words "Front" and "Forward" were given, and the trumpet sounded the charge the moment the troops wheeled up. "The charge swept the mingled mass of human beings before it; people, yeomen, and constables, in their confused attempts to escape, ran one over the other;" and, by the time the troops "had arrived at the end of the field, the fugitives were literally piled up to a considerable elevation above the level of the ground." The field and the

adjacent streets now presented an extraordinary sight; the ground was quite covered with hats, shoes, sticks, musical instruments, and other things. Here and there lay the unfortunates who were too much injured to move away; and this sight was rendered more distressing because it was observed that some women were among the sufferers. In the meanwhile the charge of the Hussars had enabled the constables to execute their warrant. Hunt quietly surrendered to Nadin, and was removed in custody. His removal terminated the meeting. Troops, indeed, patrolled the town throughout the ensuing night; but no fresh breach of the peace occurred. At six the next morning the officer in command reported to the magistrates that the town was perfectly quiet, and requested their sanction to the return of the military to their quarters.[1]

The Government approve the conduct of the magistrates

Such was the history of the lamentable meeting at Peterloo on the 16th of August. It was obvious to every one that the magistrates had incurred a grave responsibility. They had ordered the military to disperse a large assembly of their defenceless fellow-citizens; and nothing could justify the order except a clear apprehension that the meeting which they had determined to disperse was illegal. Nothing, however, could be more difficult than to decide whether the Manchester meeting was or was not illegal. At first, indeed, Eldon was disposed to take the high ground of declaring it an overt act of treason. Under an Act, which he had himself been instrumental in passing, "a conspiracy to levy war, a conspiracy to depose" the king, "a conspiracy by force to make a change in either House of Parliament—manifested by an overt act—is treason." "When he read in his law books," he said some months afterwards in the House of Lords, "that numbers constituted force, force terror, and terror illegality, he felt that no man could deny the Manchester meeting to have been an illegal one." Lord Redesdale, who had served with distinction as Chancellor

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1819, Hist., p. 106, 1820, Chron., pp. 848-895 Sidmouth, vol. iii. pp 249-260. Cf. *Life of a Radical*, vol i. p. 176 *seq*

of Ireland, and who was one of the greatest equity lawyers of the day, took precisely the same view. "Every meeting for Radical reform," he wrote, "was not merely a seditious attempt to undermine the existing constitution and Government by bringing it into hatred and contempt, but it was an overt act of treasonable conspiracy against that constitution of Government, including the king as its head, and bound by his coronation oath to maintain it." The opinions of these high authorities probably prevailed with the law officers to whom the matter was referred. They joined with Lord Eldon in advising the Government "that they were fully satisfied that the meeting was of a character and description, and assembled under such circumstances, as justified the magistrates in dispersing it by force."[1]

Nothing could have been stronger than these opinions; yet the very confidence with which they were expressed justified some hesitation in accepting them. If Eldon and Redesdale were right, it was treason for a few thousand persons to meet together and demand any reform in the House of Commons. A few thousand persons constituted numbers, numbers force, and a conspiracy by force to make a change in the constitution of the House of Commons was treason. The old right of meeting was effectually destroyed if these opinions prevailed But, in the first place, the verdict in the Spa Fields Riot made it hopeless to expect that juries would affirm this view of the law; and, in the next place, Eldon and Redesdale themselves concluded that legislation was necessary. Redesdale, indeed, with characteristic acuteness, desired only a declaratory law to remove "all doubt of the treasonable criminality of such assemblies;" but Eldon admitted that "the state of our law is so inapplicable to existing circumstances that we can't meet the present case, and I am convinced, as I am of my existence, that, if Parliament don't forthwith assemble, there is nothing that can be done but to let these meetings take place, reading the Riot Act, if there be a riot at any of them." It

[1] Eldon, vol. ii. pp 338, 348 Sidmouth, vol iii p 278 Liverpool, vol. ii. p 409

was obvious, therefore, that these great lawyers had not much confidence in their own opinions; and their hesitation was justified by the conduct of the judge (Mr. Justice Bayley), who, with admirable impartiality, subsequently tried the case. So far from laying down the law as Eldon had interpreted it, he had the good sense to leave it to the jury to determine "whether a body assembling in such numbers as to excite terror in the public mind was not illegal." The question, in short, commended itself to Mr. Justice Bayley as one, not of law, but of fact. The legality of a meeting, which the magistrates took upon themselves to disperse with military force, was ultimately referred to the decision of a jury.[1] For the moment, however, the opinions of Eldon and Redesdale prevailed with the Cabinet, or rather with the moiety of the Cabinet who were not pleasure-seeking abroad. Within three days of the Lancashire meeting the ministry received the Prince Regent's commands to convey "his approbation and high commendation of the conduct of the magistrates and civil authorities at Manchester, as well as of the officers and troops, both regular and Yeomanry cavalry, whose firmness and effectual support of the civil power preserved the peace of the town upon that most critical occasion." The Regent was at that time at Christchurch; his approval was dated the 19th of August. There were then no telegraphs, no railways. The news of the meeting on the 16th reached the ministers in London on the evening of the 17th. Two of the Lancashire magistrates themselves arrived in London in the course of the 18th. The despatch which the Regent was able to sign in his yacht off Christchurch on the 19th must have left London late on the 18th or in the small hours of the morning of the 19th Those members of the Cabinet who happened to be in town could not have given themselves four-and-twenty hours' consideration before they committed themselves to a hasty approval of the conduct both of the magistracy and of the troops.[2]

[1] Eldon, vol ii p. 337. Sidmouth, vol iii. p 278 *Ann. Reg*, 1820, Chron., p 858.

[2] Sidmouth, vol iii. p. 299

Ministers, having committed themselves to the side of the magistracy, desired that the evidence, on which their opinion ought to have been formed, should be sent to them to London. When the evidence was received, they discovered, much to Eldon's annoyance, that it did not warrant a prosecution for high treason; and they were compelled to withdraw the charge and indict the prisoners for a conspiracy to alter the law by force and by threats. The Lancashire magistrates committed them for trial at the Lancaster assizes on this charge, but the trial was subsequently postponed to York, and did not take place till the following year. Hunt and his associates were then convicted, and were subsequently sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.[1]

The ministry was partially justified by the committal of Hunt and his confederates for trial. It was also encouraged by the verdicts of the juries summoned to inquire into the causes of the death of the unfortunate persons who had lost their lives in the riot. None of these verdicts were such as could lead to judicial proceedings. Some were "Accidental death;" another, on a child, "Died by a fall from his mother's arms;" a third, "Died by the pressure of the military, being under the civil power." The magistrates of Lancashire and Cheshire thought proper, too, "to return thanks to the commanders, officers, and men of all the corps who had taken part in the actions of the day; particularly expressing their gratification at the 'extreme forbearance exercised by the Yeomanry, when insulted and defied by the rioters.'"[2]

But the position of the ministry was by no means enviable.

[1] *Ann Reg*, 1820, Chron., p 898 Sidmouth, vol iii p. 265 Political agitators of the present day may care to know the penalty attached to such offences half a century ago. Hunt was sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment, and had at the expiration of that time to find sureties (himself for £1000, two other persons for £500 each) for good behaviour for five years Wolseley was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment, and to give the same sureties as Hunt Harrison had also eighteen months' imprisonment, Johnston, Healy, and Bamford, one year's imprisonment. Each of the last four had to find sureties for their good behaviour for five years, themselves for £200, and two other persons in £100 each —*Ann Reg*, 1820, Chron, p 148.

[2] *Ann. Reg*, 1819, Hist., p. 107

General indignation at the conduct of the ministry

Though its proceedings had been approved by the magistrates of the neighbourhood, the circumstances of the meeting, or of the massacre, as it began to be called, excited deep attention. Subscriptions were opened in London and Liverpool for the purpose of relieving the sufferings of the wounded, and of obtaining legal redress against their persecutors. Several individuals of the Manchester Yeomanry were indicted for cutting and maiming with intent to kill; and, though the grand jury of Lancashire threw out the bills, their presentment proved that the conduct of the magistrates was open to question, while the public regarded the Lancashire grand jury as an interested and therefore partial tribunal Far more formidable proceedings were, however, imminent. The Common Council of London met on the 9th of September for the express purpose of "considering the late transactions at Manchester.' By seventy-one votes to forty-five, it agreed to a series of resolutions affirming the legality of the Manchester meeting, and expressing the strongest indignation at the "unprovoked and intemperate proceedings" of the magistrates and the military, which they regarded as "highly disgraceful to the character of Englishmen, and a daring violation of the British Constitution."[1] It is the privilege of the Common Council of London to have unrestricted access to the throne; and an address in accordance with the resolutions was accordingly presented to the Regent. The Regent was advised to reply in terms of angry remonstrance, but his remonstrances did not check the impulse which the address had given. A meeting of the inhabitants of Norwich, held under the authority of the mayor, requested the Regent "to dismiss for ever from his councils those ministers with whom the name of his Royal Highness had been connected with the massacre at Manchester." In Westminster, York, Bristol, Liverpool, Nottingham, and other towns similar meetings were held. Thus the suppression of one meeting by force led to the holding of many others.

[1] *Ann Reg*, 1819, Hist, p 110.

Far the most important of these meetings, both in its circumstances and its consequences, was held on the 14th of October in Yorkshire Yorkshire was the most important county in all England. "Yorkshire and Middlesex between them make all England," was the saying of Fox.[1] The Lord Lieutenant, Lord Fitzwilliam, was one of the wealthiest noblemen in the country and one of the leading members of the Whig party. Yet Fitzwilliam, as Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding, signed a requisition to the High Sheriff for a meeting at York to consider the Manchester proceedings. The meeting was held, and attended by 20,000 persons. The resolutions passed at it demanded an inquiry into the occurrences at Peterloo, but refrained from expressing any positive opinion on the conduct either of the magistrates or of the ministers. The importance of the meeting consisted, however, in the fact that it was attended by Fitzwilliam, and that his example was followed in other counties, where meetings to consider the Manchester proceedings were hastily convened by the Whig party The Whigs, indeed, at once determined to endeavour to take the matter out of the hands of the Radicals, and to direct and moderate the popular voice themselves. Without desiring to associate themselves with the views and proceedings of Hunt, they were anxious to resist the inroads which they believed the Government to be making into the privileges of the public.

The ministers were more alarmed at Fitzwilliam's action than at all the blood which had been shed at Peterloo. At the end of September they had hesitated to summon Parliament together. Before October was ten days old they had convened it for the 23rd of November. But they did not wait for the assembly of Parliament to mark their displeasure of Fitzwilliam's conduct. A week after the meeting at York a messenger was sent to Wentworth "with a letter informing Fitzwilliam that the Prince Regent had no further occasion for his services as Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire." Two days afterwards the vacant Lieutenancy

[1] Wilberforce, vol. ii p 133.

was conferred on Lord Lascelles, the eldest son of Lord Harewood, a nobleman whose position and estates were almost equal to those of Fitzwilliam.

Lord Fitzwilliam's removal from the Lord Lieutenancy

The removal of Fitzwilliam from the Lord Lieutenancy of the West Riding was an act of vigour which excited mingled surprise and alarm. Associating it with the immediate assembly of Parliament, the Whigs inferred, or professed to infer, from it an attempt on the part of the ministry to control the privileges of the country. "I have little doubt," wrote Brougham to Grey, "that they seriously and desperately intend to change the Government into one less free. I should say they did so if they passed laws restricting meetings and the press." Nor was Brougham mistaken in his shrewd anticipation. "We are in a state," wrote Eldon to his brother, "in which the country must make new laws to meet this new state of things." "The laws are not strong enough for the times," wrote Sidmouth, "but they must be made so, if it were meant to afford the country a reasonable hope of permanent tranquillity."[1]

Divisions among the Opposition.

Thus the ministry was resolute on obtaining stringent powers of repression. Nothing could have diverted it from its task but a strong and united Opposition; and the Opposition was neither strong nor united. "The Radicals," wrote Brougham, "have made themselves so odious, that a number even of our own way of thinking would be well enough pleased to see them and their vile press put down at all hazards." The more liberal members among the Opposition were far from unanimous in their desire to resist the Ministry; but the less liberal among them were even more anxious than Sidmouth and Eldon for repressive laws. Ten days before Parliament met, Grenville forwarded to Liverpool a memorandum of the measures which he thought necessary for the crisis, and assured the minister that his views were confirmed by the general concurrence of the very few intimate friends with whom he had communicated on the

1 Brougham, vol. ii p 348 Eldon, vol ii p. 340. Sidmouth, vol. iii. p. 249.

occasion.[1] Lord Buckingham thoroughly agreed with Grenville's views. The whole of this section of the Opposition, therefore, stood aloof from their usual friends, and asked for legislation at least as strong as that which the ministry itself was forcing upon Parliament.

The measures on which the ministers resolved, and which were ultimately carried, are commonly known in history as "The Six Acts." As Castlereagh was the leader of the House of Commons, and, in that capacity, was the most prominent member of the Administration, they are occasionally styled "Lord Castlereagh's Six Acts." The Acts themselves have all been included in one general indictment; but they differed from each other in their character and in their object. Some of them were measures to which no real objection ought to have been made; others of them were laws which ought never to have been passed The stronger and more objectionable proposals naturally arrested the attention of the public, and the milder bills, which were simultaneously introduced, became offensive from the company in which they made their appearance. "I see on the part of the Government," said Tierney in the House of Commons, "an evident determination to resort to nothing but force: they think of nothing else, they dream of nothing else; they will try no means of conciliation, they will make no attempt to pacify and reconcile; force—force—force—and nothing but force."[2] "The Six Acts."

Yet at the head of the Six Acts stood a measure obviously necessary, and which in reality interfered in no way with the freedom of the country. The men who had attended the Manchester meeting had been drilled. The friends of the Radicals insisted, indeed, that they had never been armed with a weapon more offensive than a common walking-stick, and that the object of the drilling was to enable them to move to the place of meeting with some degree of precision. But the Government and its military advisers of course replied that military drill was not necessary for the purposes of a peaceful meeting, and that the drillings of the population were a

[1] Liverpool, vol. ii. p. 418. [2] *Ann. Reg.*, 1819, Hist., p. 131.

dangerous symptom of the times. The military power of every state must necessarily rest in the hands of the duly constituted authorities; and the authorities cannot safely permit military organisations over which they have no control to rise up in their midst. The Ministry decided, therefore, to prohibit unauthorised persons practising military exercises. This, however, was only one of the Six Acts. The second of them was due to another circumstance. Hunt and his associates had been committed for trial to the next Lancaster assizes. Had they been indicted, as the ministry originally intended, for treason, their trial must necessarily have taken place immediately. "But," wrote Grenville,[1] "an indictment found for a conspiracy to overthrow the Government by force may be traversed by the defendant, like the smallest misdemeanour. That traverse adjourns the case from July to April, the prisoner is then released on bail, and it will be little less than nine months from the date of the accusation that the king and the prisoner will have justice done to them upon it. Such a course of judicial proceeding may operate for vengeance, it can never operate to prevention."

Such was Grenville's opinion on the eve of Parliament assembling. There was evidently a great deal of good sense contained in it, and the ministers accordingly readily paid attention to it. The result was very memorable. Lord Holland occupied a peculiar position in the ranks of the Whig party. The nephew of Fox, he had an hereditary claim to the allegiance of the Whigs. His undoubted abilities had placed him in the front rank of the chieftains of his party; while his social qualities had enabled him to gather all the foremost and all the rising men of the day round the table of Holland House. Holland had the tact to see that the bill of the Government might be made useful for another purpose. The Attorney-General had at that time the power to lodge an *ex officio* information against an accused person without taking any immediate proceedings to bring him to trial. "There were at present," said Holland, "forty informations

[1] Liverpool, vol. ii. p. 423

depending, some of which had been hanging over the parties accused for one, two, three, four, five, and for ten years." Holland, therefore, pressed the Government to add a clause to the bill enabling the defendant against whom an *ex officio* information had been lodged to compel the Attorney-General to bring on the case within a year, or to abandon the prosecution. Eldon, on consideration, assented to this suggestion; and the bill, with this addition, became law.[1]

Two out of "The Six Acts," then, do not deserve to be remembered with any feelings of asperity. The Traversing Bill, in its ultimate shape, was a beneficial reform; the Military Training Bill has remained the law of the land to the present day. But the other four Acts were of a very different character. The first of these four authorised the magistrates in certain counties to issue warrants to search for arms. The second of them authorised the seizure of seditious and blasphemous libels; and made transportation the punishment for a second conviction for libel. The third regulated and restricted the right of public meeting, and the fourth subjected all publications below a certain size to the stamp duty on newspapers. The first and third of these four were proposed as temporary measures; the second and fourth of them as permanent Acts

The Seizure of Arms Bill was almost forced on the Government by the Radicals themselves. Watson, who had been concerned in the Spa Fields riot, had the folly to boast at a Smithfield meeting that there were 800,000 Radicals armed.[2] The foolish boast intensified the fears which agitated the breasts of the upper classes. Lord Darlington solemnly declared in the House of Lords that he had received intelligence that preparations were being made in the North of England for a rising in arms Lord Strathmore confirmed Lord Darlington's intelligence; and even Lord Grey admitted the crisis to be serious Amidst the universal terror which these utterances inspired, the Arms Bill rapidly made way. A proposal to confine the right of search to the daytime was

[1] *Hansard*, vol. xli p 1008. *Ann Reg*, 1819, Hist, p 127 Eldon, vol. ii. p. 349

[2] Plumer Ward, vol ii. p. 37.

rejected by a large majority, and the bill became law in its original form.[1]

The bill to prevent seditious and blasphemous libels created more opposition than the Arms Bill. Libels, indeed, of a seditious and blasphemous nature were being scattered broadcast through the country; the Government, moreover, had signally failed in its prosecution of Hone. But neither the increased circulation of seditious libels nor the failure of certain prosecutions justified the inference that the law was not sufficiently strong. Severe punishments do not increase but lessen the prospect of convictions, and a jury disposed to acquit a prisoner under a mild law is unlikely to convict him under a harsh one The Seditious Libels Bill was divisible into two parts. In the first place, when a bookseller had been convicted of selling a libellous book, the bill authorised the seizure of the entire work. The court might be moved for an arrest of judgment; its decision might ultimately prove in the bookseller's favour, yet the publication of the work during the interval might be stopped. In the next place, the bill made banishment or transportation the punishment of a second conviction for libel. Exception was, of course, taken to the provision. "The offence of publishing a libel," it was urged, "is, more than any other that is known to our law, undefined and uncertain. Publications which at one time may be considered innocent and even laudable may at another be thought deserving punishment. Thus the author and publisher of any writing dictated by the purest intentions, on a matter of public interest, without any example to warn, any definition to instruct, or any authority to guide him, may expose himself to the penalty of being banished from the United Kingdom and all other parts of His Majesty's dominions for such time as the court shall order, or be transported to such place as shall be appointed by His Majesty for the transportation of offenders for any term not exceeding seven years."[2]

[1] *Hansard*, vol xli. pp. 591–594, 1124–1163. *Ann. Reg*, 1819, Hist., pp. 138–143.

[2] See the protest of the Lords, *Hansard*, vol. xli. p. 747.

The feeling which the bill provoked proved so strong that the Government found itself compelled partially to give way. It consented to withdraw the punishment of transportation from the bill, and to be satisfied with banishment alone. The concession did not remove the objections which the Opposition felt to the measure, but it facilitated its passage through the House of Commons. No one could defend the publications which the Radicals were disseminating. All respectable people would have welcomed the punishment of their authors; and the excesses of a few men, who endeavoured to associate themselves with the cause of freedom, unfortunately afforded the Ministry an excuse for interfering with the liberty of the printing press.[1] The measure, however, which thus became law, proved useless. The Ministry did not venture to enforce its provisions. Ten years afterwards it was repealed, but its repeal was as formal a matter as its enactment. "It was already dead."[2]

There was perhaps less objection in principle to the imposition of a stamp duty on all small pamphlets than to the severe punishments enacted in the Seditious and Blasphemous Libels Bill. Newspapers were already taxed; but the cheaper broadsheets, circulating among the poorer classes, succeeded in evading the definition of a newspaper and in escaping the tax. Cobbett was consequently able to sell the "Register" for twopence. Parliament was, therefore, asked to declare that these periodicals should be subject to the tax which every newspaper paid. The Ministry at the same time insisted that every bookseller, before commencing his business, should enter into recognisances for his good behaviour. It was, indeed, objected by the Opposition that it was a primary principle of the English Constitution that an Englishman might publish whatever he pleased on his own responsibility, and that the privileges of the people were infringed by an enactment which required the publisher in the first instance to enter into recog-

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1819, Hist., pp. 143–150.

[2] See Macaulay's speech on the 10th of October 1831. *Hansard*, 3rd Series, vol. viii. p. 396.

nisances. But the Opposition was only able to state these arguments; it was wholly powerless to enforce them. The bill became law.[1]

The most stringent of the Six Acts, however, was that which regulated and restricted the right of public meeting. The provisions of the measure introduced by the Government were concisely explained by Liverpool in a letter to Grenville:—Meetings of counties called by the lord lieutenant or sheriff; meetings of corporate towns called by the mayor or other first magistrate; meetings called by five or more justices of the peace were excepted from it. But, with these exceptions, "all meetings for the consideration of grievances in Church and State, or for the purpose of preparing petitions, &c., except in the parishes (or townships, where parishes are divided into townships) where the individuals usually reside," were prohibited. No person was allowed to attend such meetings unless he was an actual resident within such parish or township; while, to prevent simultaneous meetings, it was further decided that "previous notice must be given of the day when such meetings are to be held by seven inhabitants to a neighbouring magistrate," who was allowed discretionary power to put off the meeting. Persons coming armed and persons carrying banners were also prohibited from attending such metings at all.[2]

The object of these proposals was plain None but the upper classes were to be allowed to organise large meetings. The lower classes were to be permitted only to attend meetings in their own parishes; and itinerant orators, who would of course be strangers, were to be excluded from them. The right of meeting was to be nominally preserved, but it was to be continued in a shape which made its preservation valueless. "Parochial meetings," said Liverpool, "would generally be flat," and the ministry had sufficient courage to face a "flat" demonstration. In 1819, moreover, the measure had an additional significance. Nearly every large town in the country

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1819, Hist, pp. 158–163. Cf. *Hansard*, 3rd Series, vol vi. p. 10.

[2] Liverpool, vol. ii p. 433.

is now corporate; and the chief magistrate of nearly every large town would consequently be competent to convene a meeting. But in 1819 "Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Wolverhampton, and other wealthy and populous towns" were unincorporate, and were therefore "excluded from the advantages reserved for other decayed and comparatively unimportant places."[1] Manchester and Birmingham, therefore, already denied direct Parliamentary representation, were thus deprived of the only means which they still enjoyed of securing attention to their wishes. A measure which limited the right of meeting necessarily aroused considerable opposition, but the Opposition in Parliament was powerless to effect any change in the policy of the ministry. The whole Tory party was clamouring for decisive measures; the Grenvilleites, with Grenville and Buckingham at their head, were seconding the Tories; and the remainder of the Opposition were unable to do more than limit the duration of the Bill to a period of five years. The session of the Six Acts closed at Christmas, the ministry having substantially carried all their proposals

The measures of the ministry, however questionable they may seem in other respects, had one justification: they were successful. The firmness of the authorities checked the disorders which were everywhere menacing; and convinced the leaders of the Radicals, or those of them who were still at large, that it was impossible to pursue their designs against the Government. The sullen tranquillity into which the country in consequence lapsed was simultaneously cheered by a slight improvement in its trade. The working classes at the same time experienced the advantages of an increased demand for their labour, and of a reduction in the price of the grain which constituted their chief food. Quiet seemed likely to be restored; and the interest which the Peterloo meeting had occasioned was forgotten amidst the excitement occasioned by a new event. The old King—a king only in name, at last died. His death elevated the Regent to the throne; and political gossips speculated on the consequences which would

Death of the King

[1] *Ann Reg.*, 1819, Hist., p 154.

ensue from the change. It will be the object of the next chapter to trace the history of the miserable proceedings which followed the accession of George IV. In the present chapter it is sufficient to state that the death of the King necessitated the early dissolution of Parliament. On the 28th of February Parliament was prorogued, almost immediately afterwards it was dissolved.

The Cato Street conspiracy.

Five days before the prorogation an event occurred which filled men's minds with horror, and did more than all the arguments of the Tories to reconcile them to the severe measures of the Government. Among the more prominent leaders of the Radical party was one Arthur Thistlewood. Thistlewood was a native of Horncastle, in Lincolnshire, and was born in the year 1770. His father was a land steward, and Thistlewood was himself educated for his father's profession. At the age of twenty-one, he accepted a lieutenancy in a Militia regiment; and, soon afterwards marrying a young lady possessed of some property, exchanged his lieutenancy in the Militia for a commission in a marching regiment. He went with his regiment to the West Indies, where he threw up his profession and proceeded to America. From America he sailed for France, where he arrived after the fall of Robespierre. There "he became initiated in all the doctrines and sentiments of the French Revolutionists;" and, imbued with these views, returned to England after the Peace of Amiens. He soon became acquainted with the leaders of the Radical party, and was admitted to their councils. He was one of the leaders of the mob who were chiefly responsible for the Spa Fields riot in 1817; and, though the charge against him on that occasion was abandoned after the elder Watson's acquittal, he was arrested in the following year under the provisions of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act. On his release from prison he had the impudence to send a challenge to Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, to fight him with sword or pistol. The Cabinet decided on regarding the challenge as an offence, and prevailed on Sidmouth, against his better judgment, to

direct a prosecution against Thistlewood. Thistlewood was convicted, and on the 28th of May 1818 was sentenced to a year's imprisonment in Horsham Gaol. His year's imprisonment expired at a critical period. Birmingham was on the eve of electing Sir Charles Wolseley its legislatorial attorney; preparations were being made for the Manchester meeting; and Thistlewood at once joined his old associates. After the lamentable events which occurred at Manchester he issued a document in which he "unequivocally asserted that there is no law to prevent 10,000, 100,000, or even 1,000,000 men assembling; that no magistrate can touch them till they have struck some blow; and that it is immaterial whether they come in military order or civil array, with or without flags or arms." This document was referred to by Castlereagh in the House of Commons as one of the main reasons which necessitated the regulation and restriction of public meetings. The passing of the Seditious Meetings Bill disconcerted Thistlewood's views. The course of agitation on which the Radicals had resolved became impossible, and some sanguinary measures, almost incredible from their rashness and their wickedness, were decided on. Thistlewood and a few of his associates decided on striking a great blow against the Government. They determined to attempt the assassination of the entire Cabinet, to seize a few pieces of artillery which happened to be in an unprotected state in London; to set fire to the Mansion House, the barracks, and two or three other places, and, amidst the general confusion which these deeds would create, to establish a provisional Government. Such was the plan deliberately propounded by a band of some thirty conspirators They did not probably themselves believe in its success. The utmost that they could have hoped or expected was that the confusion and consternation which the assassination of the Cabinet would create would afford them opportunities for plunder and for escape. Thistlewood's confederates were drawn from the lowest orders. Ings was a butcher, Brunt a journeyman shoemaker, Davidson a man of colour, Adams a retired soldier, Hidon a cowkeeper.

The conspirators probably could not have collected £20 among them, and yet these obscure individuals, without friends, without resources, seriously contemplated the brutal murder of the entire Government.[1]

Thistlewood's original plan was laid with some caution. The funeral of George III. was fixed for the 16th of February. It was known that a considerable number of troops would be withdrawn from London to attend the ceremony; and the conspirators accordingly hoped that the metropolis would be left in a comparatively defenceless condition, and that an opportunity would occur for their striking a formidable blow. No such opportunity was found. Saturday, the 19th of February, arrived, and nothing had been done. The slender resources of the conspirators were almost exhausted, and immediate action had become absolutely necessary. It was ascertained that the entire Cabinet were engaged to dine with Lord Harrowby on the 23rd of February at what was then called a Cabinet dinner. Lord Harrowby lived in Grosvenor Square; and the conspirators thought that a house easily approached and easily left, situate in a comparatively quiet neighbourhood, favoured their design. Fourteen bold men undertook to attack the house. One of them was to ring the bell, on pretence of presenting a note, and his associates were to rush in and secure the entrance. Hand-grenades were to be thrown in at the window, and the ministers who were not killed by the consequences of the explosion were to be assassinated, one by one, by the conspirators.

Such was the brutal conspiracy in which these reckless men engaged. Fortunately for the Government, rumours of what was going on had, for weeks previously, reached the Home Office. Among the friends with whom Thistlewood associated was one George Edwards. He was poor and penniless—"straw was his resting-place; his only covering a blanket." Edwards was acquainted with Radical Reformers, and entered into the plots of Thistlewood and his comrades. He was charged by Thistlewood and some of his accomplices with instigating

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1820, Chron., pp 63, 921. Sidmouth, vol. iii. pp. 208, 315.

their crime. It is certain that he communicated what he heard at their meetings to Sidmouth. Edwards' testimony was corroborated by another of the conspirators. Hidon, the cowkeeper, called at Lord Harrowby's house, followed him to the Park, and communicated to him the details of the plot. The ministry, thus doubly forewarned, took measures to defeat the designs of the conspirators It was ascertained that they were to meet in a loft in Cato Street,[1] a small mews running parallel with the Edgeware Road. Warrants were immediately granted for their apprehension. A body of Bow Street officers was appointed to make the arrest, and a detachment of troops was ordered to support them. These simple orders, however, were very imperfectly obeyed. The troops were late, and the police officers attempted to make the arrest alone. They forced themselves up a narrow ladder into the loft in which Thistlewood and his accomplices were sitting, and called on them to surrender. A scuffle ensued; one of the Bow Street officers, Smithers, was stabbed to the heart, three others were wounded, and the conspirators succeeded in forcing their way into the yard. The opportune arrival of a small body of troops facilitated the arrest of nine of the conspirators, but about twelve others, including Thistlewood and Brunt, effected their escape.

Thistlewood, though he had succeeded in temporarily effecting his escape, was apprehended on the following morning in his lodgings in Moorfields. His principal accomplices were seized about the same time in other places; and a special commission was appointed for the trial of the prisoners. The trials commenced on Monday the 17th of April. Thistlewood was found guilty of compassing and levying war against the king; Ings, Brunt, Tidd, and Davidson were separately convicted of the same offence. Adams turned king's evidence. The other prisoners subsequently withdrew their original pleas and admitted their guilt. The admission saved their lives. Adams's evidence made the guilt of all the parties plain. The

[1] Cato Street no longer exists under that name It ran into John Street, a street on the east side of the Edgeware Road.

prisoners were all sentenced to death; and on the 1st of May, Thistlewood, Ings, Brunt, Tidd, and Davidson were hanged, and afterwards decapitated. No disorder occurred among the vast crowd which assembled to witness their execution. The miserable men had no accomplices at large to attempt their rescue. One of the foulest and most contemptible conspiracies that was ever planned expired with the execution of the five ringleaders.[1]

The minor actors in the plot never again emerged from their previous obscurity Edwards, indicted for treason by the relatives of the executed malefactors, hurriedly left the country. Hidon, the cowkeeper, was rewarded with a hackney carriage license. Mrs. Smithers, the widow of the murdered Bow Street officer, received a pension of a hundred a year.[2] But the plot itself effected a very different result from that which its originators had contemplated. The moderate statesmen of the day had previously doubted the propriety of the repressive measures which the Government had induced Parliament to sanction. The horrible details of the Cato Street conspiracy seemed to afford the desired justification for severe laws. All England rang with astonishment and horror; and every argument for moderate measures was hushed amidst the universal indignation of the country. Arbitrary government had won its greatest triumph through the almost inconceivable wickedness of a few obscure conspirators.

Before, indeed, the trials of Thistlewood and his associates had taken place, another series of events in Scotland had increased the consternation which universally prevailed. On Sunday, the 2nd of April, a proclamation was found affixed to the walls in different parts of Glasgow and the neighbourhood calling upon "the people of England, Scotland, and Ireland, to come forward and effect a revolution by force." It exhorted the soldiers to keep in

The Glasgow riot.

[1] The trial of Thistlewood will be found in *State Trials*, vol xxxiii. p. 681, that of Ings on p. 957, that of Hunt on p. 1177, and that of Davidson and Tidd on p. 1337 of the same volume. There is an excellent summary of the proceedings in the 62nd volume of the *Annual Register*, Chron., p. 921.

[2] Sidmouth, vol. iii. p. 317. *Ann. Reg.*, 1820, Chron., p. 62.

mind the glorious example of the Spanish troops. It recommended the proprietors of large manufactories to suspend their operations till public order should be restored. It commanded all persons to desist from labour from that day forward; and it denounced as enemies to the king and traitors to the country all who should be found in arms against the intended regenerators of their native land.

The anonymous placard, in the first instance, fulfilled its intended object. The morning of Monday broke, and Glasgow wore an extraordinary aspect. The labouring men of the city resumed their usual work; but they were almost immediately the objects of threatening visits, and were compelled to desist from it. The streets were filled with a crowd wandering about in enforced idleness; and the business of the second city in the kingdom was suspended at the dictate of an anonymous authority, whom no one could identify, and whose power or whose weakness no one knew. The magistrates hastily collected as large a military force as they were able to gather together. The Volunteer corps were called out; a few regular troops were marched into the city, and the population was warned by a proclamation against the designs of the disaffected. The counter-proclamation of the magistrates immediately answered every purpose The power of the agitators had consisted in the terror which their proceedings had inspired; their power ceased the moment that it was seen that the authorities were not afraid of them. The well-disposed resumed their ordinary occupations. With one solitary exception the ill-disposed concealed themselves. One of the Stirlingshire Yeomanry accidentally discovered an armed body of Radicals on the road between Kilsyth and Falkirk, and reported his discovery to his commanding officer. Eleven cavalry soldiers and eleven of the Yeomanry were detached to scour the road, and they succeeded in driving the rebels to some high ground called Bonnymuir, where they sheltered themselves behind a wall. The troops, after calling on the Radicals to surrender, succeeded in turning their flank, when one-half of them immediately ran away. Those who remained offered a stout

resistance; one of the cavalry soldiers was killed, and three of the troop-horses were wounded. But the rebels were completely dispersed; nineteen of them were made prisoners; many of them were severely wounded. "The whole Radical plot," as Sir W. Scott expressed it, "went to the devil when it came to gun and sword." "No other attempt at open resistance was made; and the failure of this extravagant rising served at once to open the eyes of the deluded and to crush the hopes of the deluders." [1]

The failure of this miserable outbreak, and the subsequent execution of the Cato Street conspirators, mark the termination of one of the unhappiest periods of English history. During the five years which had succeeded the conclusion of the war, society in England had been passing through an unprecedented crisis. Unexampled distress had led to almost universal discontent; and the poorer classes, crushed beneath their present misfortune, had listened to the treacherous advice of unprincipled agitators, and had been induced to perpetrate outrages of the most reprehensible character. The upper classes, instead of examining the grievances of which their poorer fellow-citizens complained, saw in every fresh disorder new reasons for repressive legislation of the severest character. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended; the right of public meeting was restricted; the freedom of the press was limited; the right to possess arms was denied; and the elective franchise was rigidly confined to the few fortunate persons who happened to enjoy it. The result of these measures was, in one sense, successful. The Ministry succeeded for the moment in repressing the designs of the populace, and in stamping out the disorders which desolated the land. The country became quiet; but the quiet was the calm of the flood which for a moment is arrested by a barrier it is unable to overwhelm. The increasing weight of the gathering waters sweeps away at last the obstacle to their progress. The increasing power of the agitated populace swept away in the end the feeble barriers of the governing classes. The penning-

[1] *Ann. Reg.*, 1820, Hist., p. 39. Lockhart's *Scott*, p. 430.

up the waters only increases the ultimate violence of the flood. The postponement of Reform in 1820 made the revolution more serious when it became irresistible in 1832.

For the moment, however, the country had been crushed into peace; but events of a startling and unexpected character gave a new turn to men's thoughts, and the wrongs of a queen induced a fickle populace to forget for a time their own grievances. The increasing liberality of the age made some concessions necessary, and the growing weakness of the Government compelled it to concede some reforms. From these various causes the history of the country assumed a new phase. Years were still to elapse before political reform was conceded by Parliament, but the era of repressive legislation, sweetened by no concessions, was gone for ever.

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